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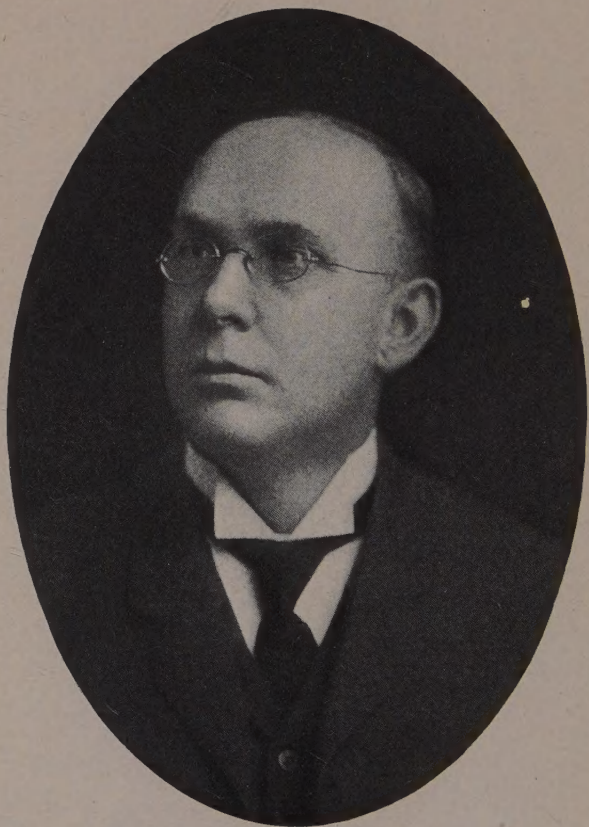


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The Methodist Pulpit

The Young Man With a Program



Geo. P. Eckman.

The Young Man With a Program

And Other Sermons to Young Men

By

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FOREWORD

THESE sermons are given substantially as they were delivered to the congregations for which they were prepared. Their single purpose is to offer practical reasons to young men for yielding themselves to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. An attempt has been made to preserve a certain unity by repeatedly turning over the familiar truth that character is always in process of making, and that every man has it in his own power to determine what sort of person he will become. Hence constant emphasis is laid upon the spiritual office of the Will, and the first discourse is made introductory to the series.

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I.

THE YOUNG MAN WITH A PROGRAM.

A NEW-YEAR SERMON.

"I am resolved what to do."—LUKE XVI, 4.

EVEN a bad man may sometimes set a good example. His iniquity will never become a virtue, but the qualities he exhibits in the practice of evil may be excellent. The devil is the picturesque embodiment of absolute meanness, but his industry, his patience, his wisdom are exemplary. Napoleon Bonaparte was one of the most conscienceless knaves that ever devastated the earth. Nevertheless, by the methods of his nefarious activity, and by his sententious utterances on many topics, he has afforded preachers of righteousness fruitful illustrations of moral themes. When one reads the story from which our text is taken he observes that the man who said, "I am resolved what to do," had determined upon a very dishonest thing. Nevertheless, he is commended by the Master for his

promptitude and his alertness in a bad situation. *What* he did was simply thievish. The *way* in which he did it was thoroughly admirable. We must denounce his act on ethical grounds, but we can not refrain from admiring his forethought and sagacity. "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

However, the text can be viewed quite apart from the character of the individual who first uttered it. "I am resolved what to do." For our present purpose these words suggest that voluntary action is necessary to secure the highest ends of living; that purpose and plan must be determined before performance can be effective; and that consecrated personality must dominate the whole process.

I. SOMETHING TO BE DONE.

Success in life never was an accident and never can be. Good fortune might be considered accidental, if we could ever believe that a regulated world has anything fortuitous in it. But success is certainly not an accident; it is an achievement. Circumstances may facilitate, but they can not create it. Wealth may be inherited, talents may be native, but success is attained. When some one charged

Rufus Choate with having accomplished a certain fine result by accident, he exclaimed, "Nonsense! You might as well drop the Greek alphabet on the ground, and expect to pick up the Iliad!"

If you rise in the world, envious people will say it is the issue of good luck rather than of good management. But that will not be the case if your ascent is an achievement. A windfall, it is true, may bring you money or notoriety. But you can be a failure, according to the nobler measures of success, in spite of your lucre and your publicity.

Jealous people try to falsify the returns. Circumstances, to which they attribute so much, doubtless aid men to get on in the world, but they are far from being responsible for achievement. Streams run down hill, and follow depressions which lie in the direction of their progress. That is nature, not achievement. Water is forced up hill by artificial agents, and made to pass through ducts prepared for it by the skill of man, and compelled to do work which is assigned to it by a superior power. That is achievement, not nature. Everything seems to turn to money in the hands of some men. Whatever they do appears to prosper by some inevitable foreordination. Evidently they have been endowed with the subtle "knack of doing things."

But the most envious must confess that these fortunate mortals are industrious with their talents. Waiting for something to happen is never a substitute for activity. "Not what *I have*, but what *I do*,—that is my kingdom!" cries the Sage of Chelsea. Man, there is something to be done!

We admire the persons who have achieved. We ignore the labor by which they have attained. Superficial people declare it is easy for a much advertised commodity to command a ready market; the manufacturer or producer has acquired a reputation. They forget the work he did to make his name famous, and his product worthy of confidence. A professor in a New England college said the other day, that he found great difficulty in impressing his students with the fact that men of achievements get up in the world by climbing rather than by stumbling. In this age of mechanical propulsion we are prone to believe that all elevations are reached by elevators, and that all distances are traversed by tramways. We forget that the elevator is an embodiment of energy, and that the engine is charged with force. When the graduate from one of our scientific schools passes out into the world he is sometimes chagrined that he must don a serviceable suit of clothing, and go into the

foundry or the shop on a level with the mechanic who has had no technical training at a seat of learning. But there is no better way. The physician with a lucrative practice has built it up. The lawyer in great demand has found his clients by his learning and his skill. The merchant became a prince by first becoming a slave. Among the works of art which gladden your eyes and fire your soul in the great Metropolitan Museum yonder in Central Park are some admirable examples of the genius of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Listen to what this master said one day: "Whoever is resolved to excel in painting, or indeed any other art, must bring all his mind to bear on that one object from the moment that he rises till he goes to bed." That explains the painter's power to captivate your imagination. He toiled terribly. Man, there is something to be done!

All this, of course, is said in a figure. A pulpit is no place in which to glorify material success as an end in itself. The preacher of righteousness must be employed with more serious business. Yet the lower achievements of life may serve to illustrate the highest. The greatest thing attainable by man is character. But, like every other genuine success, it can not be secured without industry. The hardest piece of work any of us will ever do is the

making of ourselves what we ought to be. Character is an acquisition, not a gift. We admire a man compact of all virtues, who can not be bought, or bent, or broke. There is scarcely a man who in his better moods does not wish to possess such a character. But let us not forget that to realize such an ideal there is something to be done. Neglecting the problem will only bring sad disappointment. Character never comes by accident. Poets may be "born, not made;" but the poetic instinct alone would not produce "Paradise Lost" or the "Æneid" in a hundred millenniums. The genuine poet toils passionately. No more truly is character a native endowment. People may be born good—of that there is doubt in some minds—but they do not remain good by nature, but by resistance. We depreciate by gravity. We appreciate by industry. The pure-minded Socrates did not happen to be what he was. He became so by an evolution of which he was the guide and determiner. It requires huge industry to become a saint. It is not an affair of chance, as the biographies of the holiest men abundantly show. There is something to be done. Now you are moving off into a new year of grace. You will have some valuable commodities in your possession.—three hundred and

sixty-five golden days, a certain number of ounces of physical strength, a definite quantity of intellectual force, a certain amount of nervous vitality. You will get a modicum of stimulation from the external world. Society will react upon you. But do not forget that there is something to be done, if you are to realize the best of which you are capable.

II. WHAT TO DO.

Again we turn to common life for types of the higher career of the soul. Said Thomas Carlyle, "The latest gospel in the world is, Man, know thy work, and do it." Aye, that knowing is of incalculable value. No one ever succeeded by simply doing what happened in his way. That may seem to be necessary to the man who has not prepared himself to meet emergencies. Even then it can only be a temporary expedient at best. Continued as a policy in life, it leads to penury. Something definite, to be persisted in, some one thing to which everything else is tributary, is the prime requisite. There is Immanuel Kant passing his days in comparative isolation, and never going thirty miles away from his native Königsberg, hammering out in silence his profound philosophic scheme. We talk of broadening influences

in our twentieth-century civilization. What seems to be required is a narrowing process which shall confine our thought and energy to some sublime one thing.

Let a man, therefore, sit down, and reckon with himself. Let him ascertain what are his possibilities and what are his impossibilities. There are throngs of persons attempting to do things they would never have undertaken if they had given serious thought to their own manifest limitations. They are palpable misfits. Their associates know that they are not apt for the tasks they have chosen. When a clergyman tried to secure a position for a man out of work, and suggested the line of effort the unfortunate individual fancied he was designed to pursue, the great personage to whom the appeal was made burst forth into uproarious laughter, and shouted, "Why, of all things in the world, that is the last for which this man has any capacity!" To be sure, the predictions of our friends concerning our powers are often ill-chosen. The college president who warned Phillips Brooks that public speaking was a profession in which he could never expect to excel fell very far from the mark. The masters of music have more than once admonished a budding genius that she could never learn to sing, only

to find the resolute woman a prima donna after awhile. And if we know what to do, and then proceed to do it against all croaking prophecies of failure, we have proven ourselves great beyond the power of any to discredit us. But let us be sure we are right about what to do.

Success when translated into moral terms, as already indicated, means character, and that you must feel is the highest achievement, or there would be no significance in your being inside a church. The persons who are only ambitious for money or fame or material power are out yonder in the world. You have come here because you would be helped to the formation of character, and if the Church can not teach you that, she has no good reason for her existence.

Are there any impossibilities to be reckoned with in the production of character? Are there things which you can not do for yourself in making yourself what you ought to be? Most assuredly. You can not repair the grievous faults you have committed in the past, which have left their record on your soul. You can not forgive your own sins, unless you are a Christian Scientist, and then you will only play at it. You will attempt to pardon your transgressions by pretending that you are sin-

less, but you will deceive no one—neither yourself, nor your associates, nor your God. When you look into your heart, you discover therein a disposition to evil, a fatal bias, a constitutional trend, which you realize must be curbed, or it will lead you to ruin. You can not cure that of yourself. You can retard it, but you can not subvert it. When least expected, it will break forth with exasperating violence.

An English officer in India reared a tiger's cub as a pet in his tent. It would play with him like a kitten. One day, when it was full-grown, it sportively licked the back of his hand. Its rough tongue scratched the skin, and it got its first taste of blood. Instantly it became a voracious beast ready to spring upon its protector and devour him. It must be shot at once to save the officer's life. In like manner the sinful lusts of the human heart suddenly display their deadly virulence when their presence is least suspected. That fatal propensity must be checked and conquered. You can not do it for yourself. Yet it must be done.

Your necessity is to lay hold on God. He alone can transform the passions of men into instruments of law and order. He only can expunge the sin which has blotted the record of life. We can easily

see the process. An educated man is one who has laid hold on books, or schools, or men, or things about him, and has helped himself to wisdom and strength. A strong soul is one who has taken hold of God, and received from Him the might of a sound character. You must take the initiative, for God has given man freedom of choice. But He must effect the actual work of correcting character.

Apelles and Protogenes were painters in the same city, but Apelles was the finer artist. Protogenes determined to make one picture which should excel anything Apelles had produced. He began his task, and fancied he was realizing his aim, when he was called away from the canvas. Apelles entered, and seeing the picture, took up his brush and worked diligently for a space, until he had produced a fairer result than Protogenes had dreamed of, and then withdrew. When the latter returned and gazed upon the picture he exclaimed, "Apelles has been here, for no one but Apelles could have wrought so wondrously." When you see the finest type of a man he will be found to be a man whom God has been fashioning. No human touch can make the highest form of character. If you have resolved to make character the chief end of life, on no account leave God out of the reckoning. He is the one

supreme and indispensable factor in the process of getting the utmost out of life.

III. I AM RESOLVED.

No man ever accomplished much, even though his field of endeavor had been determined, without a definite scheme. Lord Macaulay begins the first volume of his monumental work with this sentence: "I purpose to write the history of England from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living." He did not live to see the end of his contemplated task, but the result was great in proportion to the fidelity he showed to his plan, and the plain statement of his purpose is duly impressive. Napoleon said in explanation of his triumphs, "My hand of iron was not at the extremity of my arm. It was immediately connected with my head." Says Emerson, "Few men have any next. They live from hand to mouth. They are without plan, and soon come to the end of their line." Grant said, "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." The successful novel is written after years of weary preparation. Nansen went so far North because he had built a ship for the purpose, and provisioned her for years of absence, and qual-

ified his men by the most rigid discipline. The Japanese have astonished the world by their feats in war because they were prepared. The Russians have dismally failed because they were taken un-awares. No meteorologist forecasts the weather more carefully than the successful merchant examines the conditions of trade. Political parties only succeed with straight and easily comprehended issues.

Now, character can no more be fashioned on mere caprice than a house can be constructed without a plan. Longing to be good will make no man a saint. A specific ideal rigidly pursued is absolutely necessary. "I'll own a building like this some day," said George W. Childs, looking upon a huge architectural pile in Philadelphia, and ultimately that very structure was his. "I'll be a painter," said Correggio, gazing at the canvas of a contemporary, and he soon became one. "I'll be an orator," said Demosthenes, as he listened to a lawyer pleading a cause, and he went out to become one. "I'll tread the quarter-deck of my own ship," said young Farragut, and he fulfilled his prophecy. "I'll be marshal of France," said a young soldier, and he kept his word.

Is there an analogue to these instances in the

achievement of character? Unquestionably. Think of the Cilician tent-maker! "I'll be altogether a Christian," said St. Paul; "I will immerse myself in the spirit of Christ; I will know the power of His resurrection. I will have fellowship with His sufferings, I will be conformable to His death. I will avail myself to the uttermost of the very experiences of Christ." This plan he pursued so scrupulously that he could say, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." What a hero this adoption of Christ as the vitalizing center of his life made him!

There is the secret of a great life. The plan of it is Christ Himself. That is a practical scheme. It did not make a vamping idealist of Gladstone. It did not take the fire and blood out of Bismarck. It did not weaken the fiber of the Earl of Shaftesbury. It did not enervate the intellectual vigor of Sir Isaac Newton. It did not impoverish the valor of Washington. It did not evaporate the commercial instinct of John Wanamaker. It will do no man any harm. It has made heroes of thousands of men. The beauty of it is that it presents not only an illus-

tration of a fine life, but provides a method of making every life fine. Christ pours His own life into the life of men, and lo! they become like Him. You can not become a Christian by copying Christ,—you might as well attempt to copy the sun,—but by admitting His life into yours, and by being transformed by Him. That is the plan for the highest manhood.

"I am resolved what to do." First person, singular number, nominative case. Too many young men consider themselves always in objective relations. "To me," "for me," "me"—these are the words of weaklings. "The world owes me a living," they say. Of course, that is not true. They owe the world much labor. A New England schoolmaster had a cross above his desk, and around it the words of a great toiler, "What hast thou to do with happiness, except the happiness of getting thy work well done?" All this is true of making character. Goodness will not come to us. It is never superimposed. The Christ-life is not spontaneously generated. It is sought and secured through prayer, by the aid of the Holy Spirit. The longing soul proffers its plea. The loving God grants the petition. Here

beginneth the new creation in Christ Jesus, old things passing away, and all things becoming new. Yet the work divine commences only with a human purpose put into earnest entreaty and perfect surrender. "I am resolved what to do." I will give myself to Christ. I, always I, must take the matter in hand. Fowell Buxton, whose interest in the abolition of slavery continued until there was not a slave in the British dominions, once said, "The longer I live the more certain I am that the great difference between the feeble and the powerful, the great and insignificant, is energy—invincible determination—a purpose once fixed and then death or victory! That quality will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities will make a two-legged creature a man without it." One can say the same about the Christian life. It depends primarily upon the purpose to become a Christian, and the will to remain one by the help of God, despite all temptations to depart from that holy aspiration.

Is it true that character is the highest achievement in human life, that it can not reach its noblest development without Divine assistance, that its finest ideal is in Jesus the Christ, that He is immediately available to all who honestly seek Him, and that

destiny turns upon our personal relations to Him? Then, by every consideration which can have weight with thoughtful minds, let us resolve to give ourselves utterly to Him, and to do so from this instant.

"Boys, don't waste any shots!" shouted Andrew Jackson, as he saw the long line of red-coats advancing at the battle of New Orleans. "Make every shot count. We must finish this business to-day!"

That is the point. We can not afford to be prodigal of our powers. Let us waste neither time nor energy on things of doubtful import. Here is the supreme thing. *Let us do it now!*

II.

THE YOUNG MAN AND HIS CAPITAL.

"Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest."—MATT. xxv, 27. Revised Version.

THIS rebuke was administered to a man who had a small capital and did nothing with it. He would have done nothing more with a large capital. The trouble was with the man and not with his money. That is chiefly the difficulty whenever failure occurs. There is no charm attaching to money which makes it flourish in one man's hands, and dwindle in another's. There is no magic in the soil which makes it laugh with fertility under one man's cultivation, and frown with barrenness under the care of another. The cunning of capital lies in the hand that employs it.

WE ARE ALL CAPITALISTS.

It is true we entered the world empty-handed. But much awaited us on our arrival. The angel of

Providence met us on the threshold of being and endowed us with great possessions. Pauperism is abnormal. God is infinite fullness. Nature is the most lavish of benefactors. The Creator places a generous capital at our disposal. It lies all around us and within us.

Chatterton, the ill-starred genius, used to say that "God had sent His creatures into the world with arms long enough to reach anything, if they chose to be at the trouble." And provided these arms do not reach after other people's property, there is no occasion to denounce their activity. Samuel Smiles tells us that an Italian philosopher was wont to call time "an estate which produces nothing of value without cultivation, but, duly improved, never fails to recompense the labors of the diligent worker."

THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILIZATION.

The story in the Bible is that Divine displeasure drove our progenitors out of the Garden of Eden into the cheerless world. And lo! they transformed the thorny wilderness into a paradise of wonders, and filled the earth with the structures of civilization.

See the crowded commerce of the world flying with white wings over the ocean's bosom. See the

proud cities sitting, like queens arrayed in purple and diadems, on the banks of great rivers and the shores of vast seas. See the gorgeous temples and palaces which glitter in the sunlight, the triumphs of genius and of love. Go to the summits of high mountains, and survey the kingdoms of the world spread out at your feet in ever-widening vistas. All came from the hands of that half-naked pair and their children. Hungry and weak we stumbled into the world, but with capacities of sublime proportions; with bodies which are the marvel of the physicist and the delight of the anatomist; with muscular energy and physical skill unsurpassed among the myriad forms of creation; with intellects which impel us to master every kind of knowledge capable of being acquired; with sensibilities which make us susceptible of the profoundest emotions and the most celestial aspirations; with wills which transmute ambition into effort, and effort into achievement. And with such endowments the duty of employing our possessions and of increasing our acquisitions is imperative.

A SURE THING.

A safe investment is one that conserves the capital and produces a revenue. Capital invested is a

messenger sent forth to bring in returns. Noah may have been glad when his last dove failed to reappear, but the capitalist is disconsolate if his ventures bring not back some olive branch of dividends.

Many specious bids are made for the control of our capital. Those which promise most are likely to produce least. When the advertisement of a proprietary medicine agrees to cure every disease to which flesh is heir, we are certain it will cure no human ailment whatsoever. When a financial project is said to be capable of making investors rich in a few months, we know it will make them poor the day they take it up. Good investments require time and patience and skillful management.

"Thou oughtest to have put my money to the bankers." That is another way of saying, "Trust your capital with the celestial financier." Employ it under God's direction, and all will go well. Whatever you have, or secure, of any commodity may be safely dedicated to Him. The capital will remain intact and large dividends will be assured. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust

doth not corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal." That is not a keen thrust at rich men. It applies equally to the pauper on the curbstone and the prince in his palace.

I. Material wealth is only one form of capital, but since it is of large significance it may be considered first. The importance of securing the means of self-reliance must be frankly admitted. Robert Burns understood the real value of money, though he did not altogether profit by his knowledge—

"Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Not for a train attendant,
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent."

Poverty is not an enviable condition. Said Sydney Smith, "I have been very poor the greatest part of my life, and have borne it as well, I believe, as most people; but I can safely say that I have been happier every guinea I have gained."

MAKING MONEY.

Before money can be invested it must be acquired, a thing not so difficult in America as on the surface it seems to be. Some persons are born in possession of it. Their problem is not how to get

it, but how to get rid of it. The greatest number are compelled to search for it, and in this country the quest is not unhopeful for any man who has health and a fair quality of brains. So many opulent princes in America began with poverty as a companion that no average person need despair of a competency, if he is willing to pay the price in assiduous toil and patient frugality. Foreigners come to these shores expecting to find gold and silver in the streets, and are disappointed at not seeing them instantly before their superficial gaze. Nevertheless money is here in amazing abundance, and the ill-conditioned European peasant often discovers it by searching. He is constantly developing from a pauper in a shed to a nabob in a mansion. Having a consuming passion to acquire property, and being willing to live meagerly, while he saves pinchingly, not all the trusts in the world can keep him down. Hebrews, Italians, and other representative classes, are forever teaching our native American stock that wealth is a possibility to him who will pay for it. The accumulation of substance is by no means the noblest work in life, but to some men it is a providential duty, and to nearly all it is an unquestioned possibility.

CASH INVESTMENTS.

With money at one's disposal, safe investment becomes a matter of natural solicitude. Few are content to let it alone, and this is indeed one of the worst things that can be done with it. You think you could be happy with a fortune. But what would you do with it? Place it in a strong box, and lie awake at night worrying about it? Deposit it in a safety vault, and despise yourself for permitting it to be wasted in idleness? Put it in a savings or trust institution, and expose it to loss through thieves and defaulters? Invest it in houses and lands, which may depreciate in value? Buy government bonds or other permanent securities with it, knowing they will probably yield dividends for your heirs after your departure? Aye, there's the point—your departure! Would it not be a fine investment that should give its earnings to you in person, after your departure, in another world? That is the kind of channel for money we are seeking. The opportunity is open. Lay it up in heaven. Trust it to God. It can not be lost. It will pay rich dividends.

HOW IT IS DONE.

The rich man in the parable, whose barns were bursting with the excess of his harvest, exclaimed, "What shall I do, because I have no room where

to bestow my fruits?" And he said, "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow my fruits and my goods, and I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'"

But there were good opportunities for investment all about him in the orphans who might be fed, the widows who might be housed, the poor who might be clothed, the sick who might be comforted. Poor, blind worldling! he was shrewd enough to acquire, but he was too stupid to invest properly, and in one night he lost all! For God said to him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Yonder stands a great hospital, the foundations of which were planted in the munificence of one of New York's great-hearted princes. When in a sudden reverse, his fortune was swept away, this benefactor, George I. Seney, could say, "What I have given away, I have; what I attempted to keep for myself, I have lost." The same blessed paradox is expressed in Bunyan's couplet,

"A man there was, some called him mad;
The more he gave away, the more he had."

The wise man saith, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." There is a principle which has relation to the business of this world, and reaches out to the world which is to come.

The building of great monuments at public expense to celebrate the valor of heroes is not esteemed extravagant. The maintenance of public libraries, art galleries, and museums is regarded a worthy object upon which to spend the people's money. Grand opera was long sustained in this city at a positive loss for the sake of what is considered by many a valuable form of culture. Better still are those financial investments in human beings which one can make through the redemptive agencies of the Christian Church, which seek to relieve physical want and to ameliorate social wrongs, and to save the souls of men.

Edward Everett Hale declares that in the first week after Fort Sumter had been fired upon, when a New Englander asked his neighbor to sell him a horse, the response would be, "You are going to the front? The horse is yours." The men who poured out their blood and treasure to save the Union did not feel that their expenditures were in

vain. A restored country and an unblemished flag were sufficient returns for every sacrifice. Send your money round the world to bring the blessings of Christian civilization to the destitute and barbarous. The dividends will keep accruing forever.

II. A definite intellectual capital is the inheritance of every human being, and this may be greatly developed. Safety is found only in the *employment* of this peculiar treasure. The mere attempt to keep what has been given will only result in deterioration and loss. Education is the process by which the native powers of the mind are drawn out and strengthened for the noblest achievements. It is the method by which intellectual capital is made secure and productive.

THE INVESTMENT OF BRAINS.

Channing declared that parents ought to reduce themselves to poverty, if necessary, in order to give their children a sufficient education. Bancroft, the historian, tells us that when William Penn left home for America, he said to his wife: "Live low and sparingly until my debts are paid: but spare no cost on the education of the children, for by such parsimony all is lost that is saved." Benjamin

Franklin said, "If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest." The Duke of Wellington used to say that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playground at Eton when he was a schoolboy. The discussion never ends touching the value of a university training for a business career. The unfortunate element in the debate is the question of the money-getting power of an education which is forever introduced. Apart from all financial considerations the acquisition of knowledge is an imperative duty. Happy the man who is so absorbed in a passion for wisdom that, like Agassiz, he has "no time to make money." Whatever one's pursuit, an education which broadens and deepens life is of the highest importance. Pursue it in this world, pursue it in the next world. It will pay in time and in eternity.

APPLIED CULTURE.

When intellectual culture has been secured invest it with God. Thus the debt which one owes to society will in part be discharged. Education is not intended to differentiate its possessors from the mass of the uncultivated, but to make it possible for the fortunate to aid the unfortunate. It is not because the great philanthropists have been uniformly

rich, for this is not the case, that they have bestowed such benefits upon humanity, but because they have consecrated their gifts of whatever sort to the good of the world. Who was David Livingstone? A cotton-spinner in Scotland who, having acquired an education with incredible toil, laid it at the feet of Christ for the redemption of Africa. Who was John Wesley? The poor son of a still poorer clergyman who, writing books which brought the blessings of spiritual knowledge to millions, was able out of the proceeds of their sale, and by the strictest personal economy, to give away in the course of his lifetime more than two hundred thousand dollars for Christ's sake. Who was Florence Nightingale? A gentlewoman of England who devoted her culture, her time, and her money to the sublime task of relieving the misery of soldiers in the Crimea and elsewhere, and who by her appeals in behalf of the unfortunate induced the governments of Europe to show Christian mercy to thousands.

DOING GOOD BY DEPUTY.

The mischief of modern organized charity is that it divests multitudes of Christians of the sense of personal responsibility. They commit deeds of mercy to paid officials. When an old legionary of

Cæsar Augustus besought the emperor to help him in a case soon to be tried, and the monarch assigned the task to one of his friends, the old soldier said, "It was not by proxy that I fought for you at Actium." Augustus acknowledged the obligation and pleaded in person for the faithful veteran.

It was not by proxy that Christ suffered for our redemption, and if there is any good thing by reason of a Christian education which we possess that less fortunate persons do not have, our duty has not been accepted till we attempt to share our fortune with the hapless and the hopeless. And whatever we do to enlighten the world, whether by the expenditure of money or of brains, will return unto us after not many days in never-ending blessing.

III. Character is a young man's most valuable asset. When every other item in his capital has failed to be remunerative, this will be found productive, if it is a character worth having. It is always negotiable. Some Chicago merchants were able to resume business after the great conflagration, though all their wealth had been swept away by the flames, because of their characters. Here is an acquisition open to all persons. It counts for more than any other possession.

MAKING CHARACTER.

While we are making money, gaining an education, or attaining any excellence, we are constructing a character which must stand us in stead forever. Let it be a solid character.

Character is that indefinable somewhat that distinguishes a man from his fellows, gives meaning to his personality, differentiates his will, imparts color to his intelligence, individualizes himself. It was character that enabled Washington, in the face of almost insuperable obstacles, to lead the American patriots to glorious victory.

It was character that made it possible for William of Orange to raise on his personal credit two hundred thousand pounds in forty-eight hours from the citizens of London, though James had not been able to secure a much smaller sum by pledging the possessions of the throne. It was character that enabled Sheridan to wheel the fleeing army of the Shenandoah into battle line, and snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat.

It was said of Alexander I, of Russia, that his personal character was equal to a constitution. Character must always be the main dependence of the successful man. Therefore be always making character.

THE INVESTMENT OF CHARACTER.

The construction and the preservation of character may be safely intrusted to Jesus Christ. The investment of one's individuality with Him is the soundest policy which can be pursued. He who is in Himself the finest exhibition of manhood the world has known, who in Himself knows men most thoroughly because He made men, is in Himself also the one sufficient Guide and Savior of men.

He is the Pearl of Great Price for which all the merchandise of the world might shrewdly be exchanged, but who is available to every man without money and without price. One can afford to lose money, to fail of an education, to miss the honor of the world, but not to lose Him. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself?"

In Christ every man finds himself, for only so does the utmost possibility of life become realizable to him.

UNFAILING SECURITIES.

Nowhere else is there absolute safety. Pile up money, will you? The strongest financial institutions may come tumbling down some day, carrying hoarded wealth to an abyss of destruction. Pile

up fame, will you? "Moth and rust doth corrupt, thieves break through and steal." Popular favor will choose a new object, the multitude will worship at another shrine. Pile up social dignities, will you? Your costly equipage will be ruined by rust and mold, your groaning board will be emptied of its steaming viands, the applause of society will sink away into dismal silence. The queen of hearts will sit one day in tearful solitude, her beauty faded, her courtiers fled, sadly musing on the evanescence of human glory. Pile up pleasure, will you? Age, will creep on apace, and steal the zest of life away. The appetite for carnal indulgence will be cloyed, the power to be pleased will sink into its grave. "If ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel be broken at the cistern," all is gone. Ring down the curtain, turn out the lights, the play is over, the farce has screamed itself to death, and life is wasted.

But of heavenly treasures one can not be robbed. "Fear not little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." His will is written in the blood of Calvary, sealed by the Spirit of God, probated in the court of Heaven. It will surely be executed to the letter. With money, with talents,

with character, He may be trusted. For "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."

BUILDING PALACES.

There is an Indian legend of a king who resolved to build the most beautiful palace ever erected on the earth. To this end he employed Jakoob, the builder, giving him a great sum of money, and sending him away among the Hima-layas, there to erect the wonderful structure. When Jakoob came to the place he found the people there suffering from a sore famine, and many of them dying. He took the king's money and all of his own and provided food for the starving multitude, thereby saving many lives. Presently the king came to see his palace, but found nothing done toward it. He sent for Jakoob, and learned why he had not obeyed his command. He was very angry, and cast him into prison, saying that on the morrow he must die. That night the king had a dream. He was taken to heaven, and saw there a wonderful palace, more beautiful than any he had ever beheld on earth. He asked what palace it was, and was told that it was built for him by Jakoob. In spending the king's money for the relief of suf-

fering ones on the earth, he had reared this palace inside of Heaven's gates. The king awoke, and, sending for the builder, told him his dream, and pardoned him.

The legend carries its own lesson. It is the teaching of our text and of all Scripture: investments with God pay the highest dividends, and eternity alone will be sufficient to compute their value.

III.

THE YOUNG MAN IN HIS HOUSE.

"And every man went unto his own house."—JOHN
VII, 53.

SOME texts resemble a great body of fresh water, like beautiful Lake Lucerne, nestling yonder in the bosom of the Alps—crystalline in purity, as pellucid as the atmosphere, permitting you to peer into its depths without effort, leaving you to desire only that no man shall muddy it with his soundings while you absorb its azure glory. Other texts resemble veins of rich ore half concealed in rocky beds, requiring to be disclosed by the toil and patience of the skilled workman, and to be pursued until all the precious metal has been extracted. Yet other texts remind you of pictures—nothing in themselves but paint and canvas, form and color, but suggesting to the illumined fancy whole continents of thought, like Millet's "Angelus," which to casual glance reveals nothing but a couple of peasants with bowed heads, standing in a devotional at-

titude on a bare, brown field wherein they have been toiling, but which to the enlightened imagination unfolds a vision in which one can hear the chiming of church bells and see the atmosphere of heaven, the essential grandeur of the human soul, and the unfathomable glory of God. Our present text belongs to this last class. It has no depth of beauty in itself, being only a plain narrative sentence. It is not a refreshing fountain nor a vault containing treasure. The most learned exegesis could never make anything out of its terms beyond the prosaic declaration that "every man went to his own house." Yet those words signify much to the mind searching for truth in the commonplaces of life. Let us dwell a moment on the bare facts which cluster about this text.

A PARABLE OF LIFE.

A company of men, who have been exercising their minds over matters difficult to explain, break up into individuals and go back to their own homes, carrying their problems with them. They return to places where as men they are reduced to their simplest terms—to houses where they find a sure retreat from the world but not from themselves, to homes the characters of which they have created and from which they can not be separated in fel-

lowship and feeling. Now, do you not see, all this is but a type of that retirement of the soul upon itself which is the inevitable lot of every human being? A man's self is his real place of residence. His character is the structure which all his lifetime each of us is building about his soul. Out of every crowd from which he emerges he withdraws to himself. Thither he carries the problems of life. There he finds his natural retreat from the world. The place to which he comes is of his own making, and at the end of life's little day he will still retain it for the unending future; for when eternity dawns upon him every man will go "to his own house." Observe, then, what important truths are foreshadowed in this unromantic sentence.

I. *His own house* is the most excellent of a man's material possessions, provided always it is a genuine home. If it deserves this designation, its simplicity or magnificence are questions of indifference. For a man may dwell in a cottage, for which he must pay monthly hire, and without a servant to wait upon his table, and be as happy as an angel in Paradise if his house is a home; or live in a palace filled with a retinue of slaves and maintained by the revenues of a kingdom, and be as mis-

erable as a fiend in perdition if his abode is not a home. "Better a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith," said the Wise Man. Better a hovel lighted with the sunshine of affection and pervaded with the atmosphere of peace than a royal mansion whose firelights are shadowed with clouds of suspicion and envy.

A HEARTH-STONE PICTURE.

We know what constitutes a genuine home so well that definition and analysis are unnecessary. A home is not a building, but human lives knitted into a confederation of love. There is a man who, as husband and father, with the Spirit of Divine Providence in his bosom, counts it his highest joy to labor for the contentment and happiness of his household. There is a woman who, as mother and wife, with the brooding spirit of eternal love in her breast, finds her chief delight in suffering any straitening of her own life that she may bless the lives of those whom God has given to her care. To these add innocent, merry, and obedient childhood, and you have a home anywhere in the world, with or without a house. The German Kaiser says of his imperial wife that she fulfills the old German ideal, confining herself to the three K's—

kirche, küche, kinder: "church," "kitchen," "children." We should know from this that the royal houses of Germany were homes wherever they were located, for where God is honored, the household nurtured, and the prattle of children welcomed, there is a home.

A home is a place wherein one throws off the ceremony of the world and is himself detached from all the artificial conventions of an over-refined society; a retreat within whose safe inclosure the irritations of the competitive herd outside can not enter; a covert from the storms of life; the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; a quiet nest among the hills; a strong castle which no envious foe can successfully storm; an oasis in the desert, gushing perennial springs. Home is everything but heaven, and the only earthly figure of celestial bliss that can satisfy the imagination. Young man, make a home! The moment you find a soul twin to your own, unincumbered with silly conceits of the importance of much pelf, ready to share life's destinies with you without asking that you sit at kings' tables, not calculating your significance by the size of your balance at the bank—that moment make the first movement toward the building of a home. Wait not to make a fortune before constructing a home. Lay

the foundations of your fortune in a home. A home will make you victorious over the hard conditions of a busy and exacting life, and will restore your spirit when fainting under the burdens of care and anxiety. Without a home, without an anchor-age. France knows the miseries which follow hard upon the decay of the home, and America is in peril of making the same sad discovery in her large cities. When every man goes to his club in preference to his home, look for the dissolution of society and the disintegration of character. The Lord hath set humanity in families. Do not attempt to violate the providential order. Let every man go to "his own house."

THE DEEPER MEANING.

Yet all this is but a figure of that profound fact in human life which we can not disregard if we would. Men may propose to ignore the Divine order regarding the establishment of homes, but they can not escape the requirement of retreating upon themselves. No man can absent himself from his personal character. He is compelled ever and anon to retire upon his selfhood. His own house in this sense is his greatest spiritual possession, if it is a true home. If it is not this, it has become a sepul-

cher full of uncleanness, a cellar dark and pestilential, a perdition from which there is no escape. External conditions bear no important relation to such a house. The imprisoned Paul is at home in the Mamertine dungeon. The enthroned Cæsar is an alien under the purple canopy of an empire. Let us be at home with ourselves. Let every man go to his own house with joy, and not with reluctance. The advantages of this are manifold and plain.

II. *In his own house* every man is reduced to his simplest terms. Not only does he fling off his artificiality because he relishes his freedom, as Lord John Russell is said to have shuffled out of his robes of state, with an expression of relief, exclaiming, "Lie there till to-morrow morning!"—but because, also, he is aware that no pretense will save him from the knowledge of those who live in his own home. They understand him perfectly. Those wrangling Jews to whom our text refers, could maintain a lordly air among their fellows, but they were simply men of very ordinary measure when they returned to their own homes. Break up any crowd of human beings, however proud they may be, and send them back to their own houses as in-

dividuals, and observe how much difference exists between these souls taken singly and the same souls considered in the mass. The bully may overawe his comrades by his noisy bluster, only to be reduced to pigmy proportions under the calm and steady glance of a little woman at home who knows him to the core of his being. And the farther any man shrinks within himself, the lighter the valuation he will place upon himself, and that is by no means an unwholesome thing for his character.

AT HOME WITH ONE'S SELF.

It is inevitable that we should fall back upon ourselves at last. Let us come home to our own souls with a pious purpose to look ourselves bravely in the face, dissevered from all the circumstances of life, that we may the better understand what manner of persons we are. In no other way can we master the world. Stopping is often more valuable than striding ahead. Rests in music, as Ruskin has pointed out, play as important a part as bars crowded with notation. They are not music in themselves, but there is the making of music in them. When a distinguished promoter of great enterprises was asked how it was possible for him to sit in the British Parliament unperturbed while im-

mense personal interests were under discussion, knowing no haste or excitement, he replied, "I can not afford to be in a hurry. It is too expensive." The principle he announced applies to life generally. We can not afford to rush through the world inconsiderately. Pausing is quite as necessary as pushing. Let us sit down for long periods in our own houses, those characters we are ceaselessly constructing, and busy ourselves with introspection, almost a lost art in the twentieth century.

III. *In his own house* a man is compelled to solve those problems which are peculiarly his own. Detached from all considerations which inhere in business, profession, or other vocation, are the problems of the personal household, those questions of a social significance which relate to the history being made within the four walls of a home. The outside world can not settle them, and would not be allowed to do so if it were possible. Books of advice can only offer suggestions. No one can assume the responsibility of these tasks but the natural head of the household.

HIS OWN TASK.

It is so with the soul. All the problems of character are absolutely personal. In the last analysis

each man for himself attends to his own interests, if they have any attention whatsoever. The profoundest intellects have found no other way. Isolation from the world they have required for achieving the highest results. Jesus of Nazareth felt himself under the same law. "His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." His deeper associations were not with the people of His generation, but with Himself. "He was there alone," is the description of His retirement for physical and spiritual refreshment, but it is a figure of His withdrawal into the closed chamber of His own soul, to engage in struggles fiercer than any which men witnessed. And whether one desires it or not, he is forced by the very law of his being to go back to "his own house" with all the real problems of life. Happy the man who can do this with joy and not with sorrow.

IV. *In his own house*, if it is a genuine home, a man finds his secure retreat from the irk and irritation of the world. Said a man vexed with a thousand trials, and bending beneath a burden too heavy for his shoulders, "When I pass through the portal of my home all the darkness is shut out, all the cares are dropped on the doorstep. Within are laughing children, a loving wife, a blessed circle, flooded

with sunshine. Within that charmed fellowship all the woes of life are forgotten." On the morrow he would pick up that burden from the doorstep, and trudge along wearily with it through the day, but the moment he entered his home the cares of life vanished. God pity the man who is deprived of such a home!

SELF-SUSTENANCE.

But "his own house," in the sense now given to these words is deeper than this. It is himself. Can a man find strength and consolation within? Is his soul well furnished enough to supply sustenance when, apart even from friends and household, he must depend upon himself for comfort? For there will come seasons of stress and trial when no one can share his burdens with him. Can he then get within himself, and be at peace? Hear Cowper crying:

"O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful and successful war,
Might never reach me more. My ear is pained,
My soul is sick, with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled."

How many tormented souls have echoed these plaintive words! A spiritual house which is a gen-

uine home of the soul will enable its possessor to retire within and shut out the jarring dissonances of the world. St. Paul had the secret of building such a house, for he said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Contentment with him, as a close study of these words will show, meant "self-sufficiency," "self-containment;" not in any false sense of self-reliance, for his sufficiency he declared was in Christ; but he found no necessity to look abroad for help. He possessed great reserves of strength and consolation in his own soul, for he had a "life hid with Christ in God." If every man could return from the world to such a house as this, what a blessed thing life would everywhere become!

V. *In his own house* a man sees the product of his own life. This he may know is what he has made with his own hands. It did not descend upon him from Heaven, nor rise at the touch of a magician's wand from the depths of the earth. He has created it himself. The wife, the children, the pictures, the books, the furnishings, the adornments, the comforts, the very atmosphere of the place, the quality and the quantity of all things here, speaking broadly, are to be accredited to him. For weal or

woe he is responsible for what exists in this sacred place. Alas! alack! if he has been untrue to his obligations! But if he has built a real home, what joy to look upon the fashioning of his own hands!

SELF-BUILDING.

How profoundly true is this of character! The house into which a man withdraws is his own architecture. The character in which he is enveloped was not flung over his shoulders as Elijah's mantle was dropped upon the figure of Elisha. It was not taken from the wardrobe of the celestial hosts as soldiers receive their equipment from the armory of the state. It has been growing upon him for a lifetime as his soul expanded or contracted, as he turned away from this wickedness and embraced that virtue, and his own will has been gradually, but inevitably, making a house for him. What is in it? Chambers of imagery, such as Ezekiel saw in his painful vision, with walls defiled by pictures of infamy? Or is it filled with the beauty and fragrance of the flowers of righteousness and truth? That is a question of the deepest import. For in "his own house" every man sees the product of his own life.

VI. *In his own house*, speaking of material possessions, a man may not see that which is permanently his, for the vicissitudes of time may frequently shift the place of his abode, and when death terminates his earthly stay, he must leave behind him all the structures of wood and stone which he may have occupied. But in "his own house," speaking of spiritual possessions, a man does see that which is to be eternally his. That is a fact fraught with possibilities of both joy and sorrow. If character has been well constructed the thought of its continuance in the future world is attended with bliss, but if the building has been marred and distorted by sin the thought of its perpetuation beyond this life is one of misery.

GOING HOME.

The devotion of men to their ancestral firesides is one of the most attractive traits of the race. The deeper the nature, the fonder the heart of the hearthstone. Alfred Krupp, the great gunmaker of Germany, preserved the cottage in which he was born, and in which his father had known such care and sorrow, in the very heart of his gigantic works. By the provisions of his will it still remains intact. It was home, and to him as sacred as a temple. It

must not be desecrated even though unoccupied. The finest natures have always been quickened by a similar sentiment. Witness Goldsmith, compelled to drift helplessly through the world, saying disconsolately of his childhood's home in "Auburn, loveliest village of the plain:"

"In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God hath given my share—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.

I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last."

This instinct of return to the home of one's earliest experience is native to the human breast, and one of the most unquenchable passions of the soul.

It is akin to that indestructible desire of men to retain their personal identity through all possible changes of environment which may come with the passing of earthly life. Much as we may long for the happier surroundings or more glorious possessions of other men, we never sigh to be other persons than ourselves. We would be ourselves under more favoring circumstances, but always and only ourselves. And such we ever must be. Every man must go to "his own house."

THE HOUSE INDESTRUCTIBLE.

Every argument for the immortality of the soul is also an argument for the doctrine of the perpetuation of character. We can conceive of no projection of individual lives beyond the grave which does not involve the projection of individual characters. What we live in when we close our eyes upon the twilight of death we shall be occupying when we open them on the dawn of the eternal morrow. Of Judas Iscariot it is said that he went "to his own place." That will be the destiny of each of us. What gradual enlargements or adornings God may make possible to us in His long eternity we can not know, though ultimately we shall understand. For the present it ought to be clear to us that the houses we are building now will inclose us in the distant land whither our souls are now carrying us, and from whence we shall never return. Holmes has spoken eloquently, but inadequately, in his famous soliloquy:

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

The truth is more sublime than this. We shall outgrow our ignorance, our temporal limitations, but we shall never outgrow ourselves. We shall rid ourselves of our corporeal slavery, and leave the outgrown earthly shell on the shore of time. But we ourselves must abide in ourselves. We can not escape our characters. Plotinus thanked God that his soul was not tied to an immortal body, but we are bound to an indissoluble selfhood. We can shuffle off the husk of our human life, but the essential character will forever refuse to be flung aside.

What kind of houses, then, are we building? The question is of eternal import. To what sort of "own place" are we to return when our earthly days are numbered? Would we make sure of a genuine home? Let Christ enter and construct the house. If in childhood he took up His abode with us, and has continued until this hour, there is no doubt of the usefulness, symmetry, and comfort of our houses. If He has not companied with us, our buildings are probably awkward and unseemly. As you look with rueful eyes upon the blunders you have made in the construction of character, you doubtless sometimes wish you could tumble the whole fabric down to the ground, as a sportive child

playing with his wooden blocks suddenly rends the structure he has carelessly piled before him, and sends the whole into a mass of ruins, that he may begin anew. That is exactly what is possible to you. "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation. Old things pass away. Behold, all things become new." Jesus said: "I go to prepare a place for you." How can He do this save in harmony with the law of life? He must needs prepare *us* that the place may fit. "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What can that building of God be but the character which he has enabled us to construct by His grace? Evermore the ideal of the builder, toward which his highest ambitions climb, is Christ the Lord. To be like Him is the loftiest aim. Looking at Him, and constantly following Him, we say with the poet of the long gone past, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."

IV.

THE YOUNG MAN AT HIS WORK.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."—2 TIM. II, 15.

LENBACH, the German painter, called upon Bismarck on the latter's eightieth birthday, and remarked, as he was leaving, that he was sure his distinguished patron had many happy years yet before him. "My dear Lenbach," said Bismarck, with grim humor, "the first eighty years of a man's life are always the happiest." What a commentary upon the advice of the ancient preacher: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Yet a man's best days may be his last days, and the period beyond eighty may be far happier than any years preceding it.

There can be no question that the first eighty

years of a man's life are determining years. If he has acquired the art of living in that time he will never lose it in this or any subsequent life. Indeed, it is a fair presumption that the real significance of this life lies in its disciplinary character. It is a great opportunity to learn how to live.

THE ART OF LIVING.

Much attention has been paid in recent times to the sciences which aid in prolonging physical life. Clubs have been organized for the purpose of studying the methods by which all its members may become centenarians. The best fashion of fighting the deadly bacillus, the most accurate knowledge of sanitation, ventilation, hygiene, diet, clothing, exercise, and other matters relating to the preservation of health have been examined with the utmost care. With the wisdom of this procedure we have no debate. But this is not the art which concerns us most. This is simply the art of staying on the earth. Life in its deeper meaning is something nobler than this. It is the process of making character. That is no mere bagatelle. As a product of conscientious labor and refined skill it transcends in importance and beauty the best achievements of painters, sculptors, poets, and other artists in their

chosen field. What concerns us all in this business is, that life must be learned anew by every person who enters this world. History is a fascinating and profitable study. Biography is one of the most useful and provocative forms of reading to which we can give our attention. But every human being begins life in just the same ignorance of the art as if no one had ever lived before him. The maxims of philosophy and the axioms of mathematics are hoary with age, and their wisdom has been verified thousands of times, but they have to be acquired by each generation in turn.

A young man came to this city not long since to assume an important, but difficult, position. Those who secured him, frankly told him all the obstacles to success in his new field. They withheld nothing of its hardships from him. Yet he declares that he learned more of its real perplexities in six weeks that any one could have taught him in six years. If you could conceive of a human being coming to this world with full maturity of intellectual powers, and richly endowed with many graces of character, it would still be necessary for him to learn the subtle art of living for himself. We are here, despite all the experience which has been preserved for our instruction, to work out for our-

selves, one by one, the never-ending problem—how to live.

I. The thought that life is essentially a piece of workmanship, on which human beings are to bend their skill and intelligence, is one which took a firm grasp upon the mind of Paul. It is probable that in this figure we have the tracery of his own manual labor. Repeatedly he had returned to the craft of his youth, and had supported himself by tent-making, that he might preach the Gospel without being a tax upon the Churches to which he ministered. He transfers the thought to spiritual culture, for he bids his readers "work out" their "own salvation with fear and trembling." Jesus was imbued with the same spirit, and Paul may have caught the idea of life as labor from his Master. "I must work the works of Him that sent me," exclaims Christ, and gave Himself to unremitting toil. This has been the conception of life which has inspired the greatest minds at all times. They have felt that they were in the world to *be* something, and to *do* something. Corot, the painter, was accustomed to work far into the afternoon, and when the sun's decline made it impossible for him to paint any longer, he would say with a sigh, "Well, I must

stop. My Heavenly Father has put out my lamp." The finest souls have always been constrained to keep toiling until the sun of life has set. But that is not a thought to which the mind moves up naturally and easily. On the contrary, it is first approached with a feeling of resentment. Life seems to the youthful mind to be such a simple matter. We are here, not by our own determination, but by the will of others. We do not choose our path. It is, apparently, laid down for us. The thought of obligation in life is acquired with slowness. It would seem to be natural to permit one's self to be floated whithersoever circumstances might direct. When it is first realized that life means work and not play, that we are to determine for ourselves the way we shall proceed and the end we shall attain, the idea gives us pain. To be compelled to grind everlastingly at the mill, to be forever doomed to toil at a task, to be always thinking how to get the most out of life—this is not an exhilarating prospect.

THE GOSPEL OF WORK.

Yet it is this which gives life its true dignity. In our best moods we are sharply aware of this. In our loftiest moments we think nothing more contemptible than the able-bodied, full-blooded man

who sits calmly at a desk with no higher motive than to occupy a chair, and who complacently cuts coupons when they mature, with no serious purpose beyond that of permitting his money to work for him. The humblest toiler is princely in comparison.

A young millionaire recently wrote to the editor of one of our newspapers seeking advice. He desired to know what he should do to make life valuable. He could not escape wealth any more than the majority of men can escape poverty. Should he enter some department of labor and compete unfairly with others who needed that wage-earning opportunity in order to secure bread? That seemed unchivalrous. Should he seriously set himself the task of distributing his money among the poor? That would be harming, in many instances, where he intended only to help, for it is a hard matter to spend money wisely, even in charity. The position of the young millionaire was difficult. One can sympathize with his perplexity. But his disposition to do something in life which should make his character a genuine contribution to the values of society is the thing which interests us, and which glorifies him.

For, coincident with this filling up life with

work, which shall produce an output of worth to the world, is the business of making character, which is the finest product of living. Whatever else a man does, or avoids doing, he is working at himself. And the difference between men in this particular is that some are studying patiently to this end, as Paul suggests all should do, and others are bothering themselves not at all over the problem.

ECONOMICS OF LIFE.

But those who are negligent about this are exceedingly improvident. For, when this season of apprenticeship is over, the only possession which any of us will have is character, the product of living. Multitudes are waiting for some inventive genius to discover a method by which houses, lands, money, and jewels can be transported from this world to that unseen life which we speak of as "the beyond." Thus far all attempts to find a means of transit for the material effects of life have failed. It may be a confusing thought, but it is true, that one minute after he has stopped breathing the millionaire will not be worth one cent. What he takes with him can not be reckoned in commercial terms. When a rich man dies people frequently ask, "What did he leave?" Well, he leaves everything, posi-

tively everything, except himself. He will not require a special train to carry his character into the next world. He will not need a vessel as large as the urn that contains his ashes after he has been cremated. All there is of him—his character—will go out with his breath, and will find its way to its own place.

It would seem to be the highest wisdom, therefore, to make that character fit for him to live with in the next world. He should be taught to remember that there is no least thing in life which does not affect the product of his workmanship, character; that one can not daub mortar over two bricks and put them side by side without affecting character. You suppose that you can slight a small task with impunity because it is small. You will do well enough to satisfy the charitable eye of your employer, but you will not worry yourself into doing the best of which you are capable. That is suicide. The characters of human beings are frightfully marred by rooms not swept, dinners not cooked, buildings not finished, solos not sung, sermons not preached up to the limit of one's ability. Robbing one's self seems like a silly crime, but many persons are guilty of it. Ideal perfection is not required, but the best one can do is demanded, if for

no other reason, that we may serve our own advantage.

CONFRONTING THE RESULT.

Life is a piece of workmanship, and we are bound to meet what we turn out. That thing which you are constructing will confront you some day. That horseshoe the blacksmith is forging, that piece of embroidery the needlewoman is fashioning, that task the schoolboy is droning over, that ship the naval architect is shaping, will rise up in the toiler's character to bring joy or shame to the soul of the doer. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

II. The product of living as a fine art will be subjected to three kinds of criticism, two of which are mentioned in this text. The third, which we may consider first, as of little consequence, is evidently not in the mind of the apostle. That is the criticism of society, which we sometimes refer to as "the world." People sit in judgment upon us as if we were pictures or books. This is inevitable. We have put ourselves in the public mart, and we must submit to the consequences. There is no occasion to be irritated if the criticism pronounced upon us is indiscriminating, not to say unjustified. That is

the way of much criticism. "Who ever saw mountains like those? Or such an atmosphere? Or such clouds?" contemptuously asked a visitor to an art gallery, as he stood looking at a large picture. "I have," said a man at his side, "in Italy, where I painted this subject."

POPULAR JUDGMENT.

There is no occasion to be flattered by criticism which is favorable. "Beware when all men speak well of you." Popularity may be discreditable to character. Public disapproval may be a high encomium. Many persons thought Christ a fool, and some considered him a knave. The folly and foulness of his enemies were thus disclosed. Despite their condemnation, He was both wise and holy.

There is no occasion to be influenced by popular judgment, in any case. We are individuals, and there is no better evidence of our personal deterioration than a disposition to conform to the types of the world. We are insulted when we are addressed in the mass, as if we had no distinctiveness. Let us refuse to be nonentities. Let us assert our individuality, and defend it at all hazards. The fact that everybody does a thing is often the best of reasons for us to refrain from doing it.

MY OWN OPINION.

The criticism of one's self is of far more importance than the criticism of our fellows. "A workman that needeth not to be ashamed" is the ideal we seek to realize if we have a true consciousness of the influence of self-respect in forming character. That is the testing point with every great artist. He desires, above everything else, to satisfy himself with the products of his genius. The professional critic may be right or wrong; but if the worker be ashamed of his own handicraft, it matters little to him what others may think of it. It is difficult to tell whether we blush more deeply on account of praise we do not merit, or because of blame which we do not deserve. Each is hard enough for a conscientious person to bear. In each soul God has set up a court of inquiry, before which actions are weighed and motives are balanced. That is conscience, moral sense. How do I stand with myself? That is the question of paramount importance.

Robert Browning's father was placed by his father in an important commercial position in the West Indies. But he threw up the position because it involved him in some recognition of slavery. Whereupon his father disinherited him, flung him

out of doors, and sent him a bill for the cost of his education. Still, young Browning had saved his self-respect, and could face his own moral sense without blushing. We are the judges of ourselves. Our future destiny, not less than the present, will be determined by our own consciences. John Newton, once very wicked, and afterward very useful as a preacher of the truth, was converted by a dream. He saw the Judge on the great white throne. Before Him, in unending procession, appeared the millions of earth's inhabitants, to be judged from the Book of Life. But the Judge said nothing. He did not lift His finger. Each man, as he came to the place of judgment tore open his bosom as one would tear open his shirt, and compared himself with the commandments in the book. According as he found his life in correspondence with, or in defiance of, these laws he went to right or left, to heaven or hell, by his own self-judgment. That is not a dream only; that is fundamental fact. We shall know our destiny independently of any judicial sentence.

THE DIVINE STANDARD.

The criticism of God is the supreme test of character. "Study to show thyself approved unto

God." One night, when many travelers were eager to reach their homes, the man at the door of the railway station leading to the train insisted on examining every ticket, despite the murmurs of the crowd. A gentleman said to him, "You are a very unpopular man to-night." The reply was sententious and significant, "I wish to be popular with only one man—the superintendent." If we meet the approval of God we need never torture our souls over the question of our popularity with others.

We have God's standard of conduct and character plainly set forth in the Holy Scriptures. We may complain that it is exceedingly high and practically unattainable. This is always true of the noblest ideals. But the loftier the purpose the higher the reach. God holds before us perfection as the goal toward which we are to stretch. Had He placed anything less than this for our ambitions to seek we should have been content with imperfection. A holy discontent with ourselves impels us to aim at the highest excellence. We have but to do our best, following the light of God's revealed will, and we shall safely pass the Divine scrutiny. But alas! who does his utmost? An infidel said that if, when he died, he found there was a God he would

walk up to him and say, "I was mistaken; but you placed me in a difficult position. You have been a hard master. Now do with me as you will." He will never do it. It is impossible to conceive of a human being so devoid of moral sense, so warped out of all semblance of spiritual intelligence, so degraded in character, as ever to attempt such bravado in the presence of an infinitely holy God. When it is our fortune to stand before the face of Him "who loved us and gave Himself for us," we shall confess without a moment's hesitation that the responsibility of our misguided conduct is our own, and cast ourselves wholly upon the unfailing mercy of our Savior. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it in abundance. He who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," also said, "Learn of Me."

If our purpose has been fixed to do His will, the deficiencies of our lives will be pieced out by His perfect righteousness, and our work, with all its imperfections, will pass under His approving glance of love. Not what we succeed in accomplishing, but what we have honestly striven to do, will be the measure of our merit in His infallible judgment. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

V.

THE YOUNG MAN WITH AN AMBITION.

"Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence."

—3 JOHN, 9.

WITH a single flourish of his facile pencil, the framer of these words has dashed off a character-portrait which is singularly effective. He has thus provided the means of studying one aspect of human life under conditions which are peculiarly favorable, for the mind of the reader is not disturbed by a confusing mass of details. The study of character is of great value to the young. By pursuing it they learn how to avoid the blunders which have ruined some of their predecessors and how to emulate the virtues which have made others successful. This makes the reading of biographies as useful in the formation of character and the regulation of conduct as the study of mathematics, languages, and science is important in preparing for the common work of the world. Herein also lies the value of good fiction. In so far as it is true to

life as it really exists, it shows in a dramatic way the pitfalls which are to be avoided, the safe paths which are to be chosen.

ONE STRONG CHARACTERISTIC MAKES THE MAN.

A careful study of biography and of the saner fiction discloses the fact that one fundamental characteristic determines the whole trend and effect of a life. There is one dominant note in every significant life. Of one person you say he is courage personified, as was the case with John Knox, at whose grave Melville said: "Here lies one who never feared the face of man." Of another you say he is a concrete expression of perseverance, as was the fact with Robert Bruce, who after twelve successive defeats at the hands of Edward, rallied his forces for a thirteenth onset, and as a consequence wore the crown of Scotland. Of another you say that he is faith incarnate, as might be your characterization of Columbus, who believed though other men doubted and scoffed, and by faith triumphed gloriously. Of another you say that his name is synonymous with pride, as was Milton's *Satan*, or with covetousness, as was the same poet's *Mammon*, or you will call another the incarnation of selfishness.

Now, it is obvious that if the dominate characteristic is excellent it will make the whole life admirable, or if it is ignoble it will make the whole career detestable. A brave man will swing all his qualities over into subordination to his heroism. On the other hand, a coward will impregnate his better nature with his craven spirit.

ONE VICE SPOILS THE WHOLE MAN.

As a drop of poison pollutes a whole glass of water, so one touch of evil sullies and weakens an entire character. No man is greater than his pre-eminent defect. I know a man who has spoiled his life by suspicion. It has come to be a species of insanity with him. His most intimate friends are subject to the scrutiny of an eye made green with jealousy, and yellowed by the jaundice of suspicion. His morbid vigilance in watching other men and mistrusting their motives has made him incapable of great achievement, for it has weakened his whole moral fiber. This secret sin has neutralized his virtues. The other day the newspapers chronicled the fact that a car full of miners had suddenly torn away from its connections and shot down the shaft several hundred feet to ruin and death. The cables had been inspected that very morning, and the car-

riage pronounced safe. But some part of the structure was at fault, though it escaped observation. The man who goes to pieces publicly has torn his character secretly at some vital point long ago. No life is stronger than its one fundamental defect.

THE CASE OF DIOTREPHES.

Of the truth of these reflections the phrase chosen for our text is an illustration. All we know of Diotrophes is that he had a passion for prominence, and that his fatal fondness for power made him a nuisance to the Church of which he was a member. It is uncertain whether he was a layman or a clergyman. In any case he was a self-assertive, recalcitrant, heady disturber of the peace. He was given to the rule-or-ruin policy. He would not receive John's letter to the Church, nor have fellowship with the messengers of religion which were sent. He would scorn the authority of any apostle. He loved to have the pre-eminence himself. He would take commands from no one. Self-seeking was his dominant characteristic. And this ruined him, despite any fine qualities he possessed, which under other circumstances might have made him very effective. If Diotrophes was a bishop, as some maintain, then though he were as eloquent as an

archangel, or as wise as the foremost statesman of Rome, it would avail little. If he was a layman, though he were orthodox to the core, generous to the utmost of his power, busy to the fullest extent of his time, it would not be sufficient to counteract the fell influence of his overweening ambition. Self-seeking crowded love out of his heart. Paul has stated the case for all such misguided religionists: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Love will not permit a man to push himself forward against authority, to trample others under foot. But where no love is, selfishness will reign supreme, and character will be ruined.

The perils of an unsanctified ambition have been so frequently described by seers and poets, that perhaps they need not be emphasized here. Yet the admonition can scarcely be overdone. To occupy lofty station under any circumstances is beset with

danger, but conspicuous places gained through selfish endeavor are peculiarly hazardous.

It is said that Pius V, when dying, cried out in despair, "When I was in low condition I had some hope of salvation; when I was advanced to be a cardinal I greatly doubted it; but since I came to the popedom I have no hope at all." Alexander I, of Russia, was accustomed to say, "Kings have great need of mercy." These typical utterances of thoughtful potentates indicate how perilous high position is. How much increased the danger must be when personal prominence has been made the supreme object of the soul's ambition.

DISTINCTIONS IN AMBITION.

But we must remember that not every ambition, the fulfillment of which involves personal advancement, should be denounced as culpably selfish. There may exist an aspiration which, though it result in the exaltation of him who possesses it, is not inherently evil. Ambition plays a legitimate and very important part in any rational scheme of life. It is a great motive power. It propels the machinery of life. It preserves the steadiness of the soul in the midst of the world's alarms. It sustains the famishing heart with food and drink. It

is another name for hope, without which life is not worth living; and it is not to be deprecated. I stood by the bedside of a godly man while he was dying, and heard him say in a self-condemnatory tone, "I have been very ambitious," as though he were accusing himself of a mortal sin. Yet all who knew his inner life understood that the thing for which he was chastising himself had been responsible for a large measure of his usefulness in the Church of Christ. Probably as he slowly advanced toward the awful reality which death introduces, all earthly things shrank into insignificance, and he felt that aspirations in a world so evanescent were foolish and sinful. His sensations were akin to those of Edmund Burke, who, when he was about to confront a political antagonist on the hustings, the people having assembled in great numbers, and demonstrations of enthusiasm having risen to an unwonted pitch, suddenly received a message announcing the death of his opponent. Amid the breathless silence which followed he lifted up his voice and said, "What shadows we are; and what shadows we pursue!" That was a healthful sentiment. Nevertheless life is only great as its purposes are large, and ambition unmixed with ignoble motives must not be condemned.

THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE YOUNG.

Youth is the period in which ambition usually flowers forth into its greatest vitality. As age creeps on, aspirations wane. It is not because men of years decrease in ability that they decline so sadly in effectiveness, but because their store of ambition diminishes with increasing age. By every standard of measuring power men and women of experience ought to be worth more to society than persons of youth and immaturity. The trouble is that to age the ambitions of youth seem to be mere illusions which vanish at the touch of real life. The game does not seem to justify the hazard. What's the use of so much effort?" is the querulous cry of elderly persons. But youth has not yet suffered disillusionment. Like Beaconsfield it shouts, "Nothing is difficult to the brave!" or like Napoleon exclaims, "There shall be no Alps!" To the young there are no impossibilities and no impracticabilities. Therein lies the secret of keeping young. Let the aging man be resolved that he will never succumb to the feeling that effort does not pay, and he will have partaken of the fountain of perpetual youth. Paul never became an old man, though he suffered enough to wear out a score of bodies. Luther was youthful in spirit to the end of life. Defoe wrote

the best book for boys in the English language when he was sixty. The saddest hour in any man's life is that in which he lays aside his early ambition, folding it up in a napkin and burying it in a deep, unmarked grave of oblivion. Retain your aspirations. They contain the secret of life. Religious development, as well as intellectual achievement and material success, are dependent upon it. Unless one aspires to be increasingly holy as his years multiply, he will never come to the fullest ripeness of character. While he was yet a stripling Jonathan Edwards wrote down his resolution that, on the supposition that there was only one man in a generation who most fully realized in his life the highest Christian character, he would endeavor to be that man in his time. There can be no question about the beneficent effect of that ambition upon his religious life.

An ambition to be first in any legitimate field of human achievement is not of itself blameworthy. It was said of an English statesman that had his lot been that of a bootblack, he would have determined to make himself the most effective bootblack in the British dominions. Transfer that purposeful spirit to the realm of spiritual life, and it becomes truly sublime.

THREE EXCUSES FOR AMBITION.

To the Christian the pursuit of high place is permissible only on certain conditions: 1. When the purpose is to realize the utmost in life of which one is capable. The highest dignity in life consists in doing one's best. To aim at less than this is to fall below mediocrity. To do just well enough to be respectable is really to be discreditable. Moreover, it is to cheat one's self, one's neighbor, one's God. How sadly the artist suffers when he paints below his ideals! Rousseau, the French painter, called the attention of a brother artist to a certain space on one of his most famous pictures, and asked him if he did not think it finer and more expressive than anything else in the canvas. His friend acknowledged it was. "Then," said Rousseau, "all the rest must be brought into harmony with that diapason of light." Whereupon his friend said: "But such a course, generally pursued, would make it impossible for an artist to paint more than one picture in a life time." "Well," replied Rousseau, "an artist ought to be generous enough to spend his whole life on one picture, that he might thereby ennoble his race and glorify his Creator." If, in any department of activity we are seeking to develop our talents to the uttermost for the glory of God,

who endowed us with these gifts and graces, personal ambition can not be reckoned reprehensibly selfish. 2. When there is a purpose to serve humanity, seeking personal advancement is not blameworthy. There is a divine motive in such self-assertion. That was one of Christ's distinctive characteristics. He pushed Himself to the fore; He repudiated the claims of competitors; He obstinately set Himself for the primacy among men; He arrogated ultimate authority to Himself, only and always that He might serve humanity. That was a mark of Abraham Lincoln's greatness. When he saw slavery in one of its grossest and foulest manifestations, while yet a mere youth, he swore that he would smite the infernal iniquity if ever the chance came to him; and whatever other political ambitions may have been mixed with this purpose, it was the supreme motive which nerved his arm and inspired his toil. Pre-eminence is sometimes sought through the accumulation of wealth. There is nothing inherently evil in that. But the power which money gives can only be legitimately sought by the Christian as a means of increasing his ability to serve his fellows. 3. When a sense of duty demands self-advancement, it may be worthily made an object of search. When one sees that conspicu-

ous places are being badly and inadequately occupied, and says, "I will take this leadership because I can discharge it effectively and thus save society from harm," there is something sublime in the aspiration. It is a noble thing for a youth to determine that he will make himself master of a certain situation because he is capable of managing it better than it is being directed. Duty sounds the most imperative call in the world. Wordsworth saw its divine dignity as few are capable of perceiving it.

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
 The godhead's most benignant grace;
 Nor know we anything so fair
 As is the smile upon thy face:
 Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
 And fragrance in thy footing treads;
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
 And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh
 and strong."

If duty summons thee to a certain task, face the world's scorn and assume it, I charge thee by the highest interests of thy soul.

CONSIDERATIONS FOREIGN TO THE SELF-SEEKER.

These are motives of which the self-seeking Diotrepes knew nothing. He loved the pre-eminence for the mere sake of being lordly. He would not harness himself to any other leadership. He

must be the Alpha and the Omega; the beginning and the end; the first and the last. There are many like him, who think only of themselves when they determine to engage in any enterprise. The policy is suicidal, besides being a mere waste of energy. Federation, concentration, combination are the watchwords of the twentieth century. Individualism has received its death blow in almost every field of human endeavor. It ought to be so in the realm of religious movements. An army all colonels would soon disintegrate. To follow is as important as to lead. To associate is wiser than to differentiate under many circumstances.

Hear a parable. A couple of shining dewdrops, glistening on a green leaf near the top of a tall tree, fell into conversation. One said, "I propose to lead an independent life. I shall sally forth into the world presently and make a record for myself." But the other said, "If I can find anybody to join me, I propose to unite my energies with others, and thus contribute to some general movement for the benefit of the world." Just then the jolly old sun pushed his face down between the branches of the tree and drank up the first dewdrop, which was never heard of again. But the wind, in a friendly spirit, brushed the other dew-drop into the brook

that babbled at the foot of the tree. There it found companions, and in their society went laughing toward the river, and thence through many miles of happy pilgrimage to the sea, and all the while it bore its part in sweetening the land and refreshing the souls of men. Let us not be deluded into supposing we lose ourselves in the mass if we are federated with others for a good purpose. Not an ounce of our energy will be lost, not a particle of our individuality wasted. On the contrary, we shall multiply our powers of blessing humanity.

THE TEST OF LEADERSHIP.

What has just been said must not be construed as denying the righteousness of aiming at a proper leadership on the part of those who are qualified for commanding positions. But neither must we ignore the prime requisites for leadership. Men fall into influential positions not capriciously, but by a definite law of human life. The demand is always for serviceable men. To render themselves most effective, men must know how to sacrifice themselves for the advantage of others. The path to power lies through Gethsemane and over the brow of Golgotha. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," said Christ. "Whosoever will be great

among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Paul understood this principle and said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," and he declared that if he must boast, it should be, not in his successes, but in his infirmities and losses, that Christ might be magnified.

THE RULE OF THE WORLD.

It was a Divine utterance that "whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." But the world, speaking broadly, awards its prizes on the same principle. The Duke of Alva erects a great statue of himself in the Brussels Square, but the people who are being destroyed by his leadership of King Philip's cruel minions rend the monument to fragments, and mold its metal into bullets to fight their inveterate foe. The Duke of Wellington goes down into the trenches to fight in company with his soldiers, and goes up into the shining ranks of the world's most illustrious servants. Washington condescends to engage in the most menial tasks of the common militiaman, but he wins a distinction peerless among great leaders. St. Bernard forsakes a

great inheritance, refuses emoluments, immures himself in a monastery, but he becomes, as Gibbon declares, the oracle of Europe, at whose feet monarchs and great ecclesiastics sit and learn. The pre-eminence will come to that man who denies himself, takes up his cross daily, and follows Christ.

St. Paul said to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth;" by which he did not mean that ambitious youth should stoutly maintain its rights by braggart force. He explained himself in the next sentence: "But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." In other words: "Compel deference by deserving it." He alone is worthy to reign who has abased himself to serve even with suffering. Over the crown thus obtained the glory of Divine favor will hover with eternal radiance.

VI.

THE YOUNG MAN AND HIS MEDITATIONS.

"Think on these things."—PHIL. IV, 8.

WHEN the soul of Justin Martyr began to be athirst for God, he first sought relief among the representative philosophers of his day. But the Stoic simply intensified his anguish by telling him it was foolish. The Peripatetic disgusted him by demanding a fee. The Pythagorean dismissed him because he did not understand music and mathematics. Then he fell in with a Platonist, who told him to think, and to do nothing else, until his mind soared away to Deity. Charmed by this advice, he went to dwell by the seashore, that, undisturbed by the world's tumult, he might think his way to God. One day, while he was pacing the sands to the rhythm of the waves, he found himself staring into the face of an old man, who said, "Do you know me that you gaze so earnestly upon me?" Startled

into self-consciousness by this sudden interruption, Justin explained that he was in search of truth, and disclosed the method of his quest, whereupon the aged stranger deftly drew his attention to the Christian revelation, as containing the sublimest exposition of truth ever made to the mind of man. It enchained his thought; it captivated his spirit. He became a convert to its amazing philosophy. Without doffing his scholastic robes, he went through the classic cities, intent on winning learned pagans to Christ. He took his position near the public baths in Rome, and conversed with the passing throng on the interests of their souls, and until he attested his faith by a martyr's death, he continued to be an eloquent advocate of the doctrines of Christianity. The thinker had been provided with an object worthy of his profoundest meditations. That was a fact of the deepest importance, for it is indispensable to the highest spiritual development that there shall be first a disposition to think, and then a divine somewhat on which to expend the mind's energies. Christianity supplies these two essentials. It awakens dormant intellectual powers to activity, and then furnishes the mightiest themes which can engage the thought. In this lies one of the secrets of its omnipotence.

SUBJECTS FOR REFLECTION.

One peculiarity of the passage from which our text is taken is that it presents a catalogue of excellences on which to think, and that these admirable things are equally praised by both pagan and Christian writers. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Now these are things which you will find commended by Seneca, Plato, Epictetus, and other heathen writers. They are also taught by such modern pagans as Goethe, Carlyle, and Emerson. Nothing slanderous is intended by this way of characterizing these great persons. Goethe had an insight into the spiritual nature of man which was quite divine. Carlyle has taught us the nobility of truth and sincerity as few apostles have been able to do. Emerson was an angel of light and leading to many souls of men. But these teachers were not essentially Christian. They were beautiful-souled pagans. They illustrate the possibility of learning truth from enlightened minds of all cults. The supercilious disdain of heathen writers sometimes affected by good people is not

genuinely Christian. Nor is any contempt of human nature. There is something good in humanity everywhere. God is present, however obscurely, in every man. Where God is, there good is, whether we are able to discover it or not.

"If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." That word *virtue* was a great term with the Romans. It expressed the sum of all excellences. It meant valor, manhood, civic righteousness, social health, national integrity. Paul uses it but once. It is never employed again in the New Testament in this sense. But Paul would omit no appeal which might move his readers. He therefore bids these Philippians meditate upon the heathen virtues which they had been taught before Christianity had touched them.

THE PRIMACY OF CHRISTIANITY.

But it must be remembered that Christianity embraces all that is good in any system of morals, and that it contains much more than all others combined. Its supremacy consists in the fact that, in addition to this advantage, it is able to do what no other religion ever has done—it offers these great excellences embodied in a personality. They are vitalized and made active in Jesus Christ. What-

soever things are true inhere in Him who is the Truth. Paul would commend to these Philippians and to all Christians everywhere the thoughtful consideration of goodness, however expressed, as a means of constructing character. And if abstract goodness can not seize upon the heart with much firmness, as it must be confessed it frequently can not, he would have us study goodness concretely exhibited in character and conduct, and especially in the spirit and life of Jesus Christ. The blessed consequences of such contemplative study are truly wonderful.

I. The first great benefit of habitual meditation upon moral excellences as expressed in character, to which attention is now drawn, is that a man will thus come to know himself, which is the beginning of any advance toward personal improvement. Ruminating on goodness will lead one to institute comparisons. By far the larger part of our accurate knowledge about any matter is reached through the process of comparison. Self-knowledge is the greatest human wisdom we can attain. Studying goodness, as displayed in good persons, will surely reveal by contrast the defects in our own characters. We shall come to know ourselves.

An Englishman used to meet the great philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, every morning walking with his ugly poodle along the promenade in Frankfort-on-the-Main. Schopenhauer's eccentric appearance, deeply immersed in thought, excited the Englishman's curiosity to such an extent that one day he could contain himself no longer, and, walking up to the philosopher, he addressed him sharply thus: "Tell me, sir, who in the name of fate are you?" "Ah," said Schopenhauer, "I only wish I knew myself." In a more serious and truthful sense thousands of our fellows might well confess their ignorance of themselves.

Introspection, which may indeed run into morbid and unduly prolonged self-examination, if not properly guarded, is almost obsolete in the twentieth century. Channing has well said, "Millions live and die as truly strangers to themselves as to countries of which they have learned the names, but which human foot has never trodden."

IGNORANCE OF SELF.

The conditions of modern life render self-knowledge very difficult and rare. Absorption in business, preoccupation with the affairs of the bustling world, have made meditation a lost art. We think

earnestly enough upon the material interests of life—what to eat and wherewithal to be clothed, and how to realize the ambitions of life—but our intellectual life is so burdened by these things, our brains are so wearied by them, that we have no strength for more important concerns. The consequence is that, unaware of their moral decline, men often surprise themselves by their own lapses from right conduct. We may be very certain that when men who have reached high positions in public esteem, and are known for their adherence to Christian ideals, suddenly violate the highest code of ethics in their commercial transactions, they are almost as much surprised at the disclosures of their guilt in the newspapers as are their friends. We have all doubtless been appalled at our own unpremeditated actions, and have asked, upon awakening to a sense of our wickedness, "Is it possible I am that kind of a man?"

Now, thoughtfulness touching moral excellence is one of the surest safeguards against such sudden losses of moral equilibrium. And in cases of moral lapse, thinking in this sense is a kind of John the Baptist crying in the soul, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It was only when the prodigal son had "come to himself," had ar-

rived at sanity, that he said, "I will arise and go to my father." Shakespeare makes the Archbishop of Canterbury say concerning the youthful Henry V, whose early years had been spent in riotous excess, but who on the death of his father began to reform:

"Consideration like an angel came,
And whipped the offending Adam out of him,
Leaving his body as a Paradise
To envelop and contain celestial spirits."

Samuel Johnson said, after returning one night from a fashionable entertainment in London, that what most powerfully impressed him when there was the fact that not one of the people present dared go home and think. Yet thinking is the first requisite for any improvement in moral character, the initial step of which is self-knowledge.

II. While thus arriving at self-knowledge, the thoughtful soul will also be obtaining an education in moral judgment. The need of a safe standard by which to estimate moral values is very imperative in our day. Conscience is capable of perversion as well as culture. Meditation upon the true, the honest, the pure, the reputable, will conduce to the formation of a correct gauge of ethical qualities.

MIND AND MORALS.

"A thinking man," said Thomas Carlyle, "is the worst enemy the Prince of Darkness can have. Every time such an one announces himself, I doubt not there runs a shudder through the nether empire; and new emissaries are trained with new tactics to, if possible, entrap him, and hoodwink and handcuff him." Accepting this conjecture as correct, the most strategic work of the Christian, we may confidently assert, is to educate thinking men and women. A religion without intellect is both unsatisfactory and unproductive. It is true that a man all head will become a skeptic. It is equally true that a man all heart will become a fanatic. And, with all reverence, let us say, "Better be a skeptic and doubt many things, than a fanatic and believe what is monstrous in its character and stultifying in its influence." "It were better to have no opinion of God at all," said Lord Bacon, "than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him," and he illustrated his meaning by a reference to Plutarch, who said: "Surely I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man at all as Plutarch than that they should say there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born." Such a view of Deity had the ancients in their conception

of the god Saturn. Agnosticism itself could not have a more baneful effect upon character than such puerile fancies. Intelligent faith is the only reliable faith. Thoreau held that, under certain conditions, even God could admire an atheist. Certainly, to believe there is no God is not so pernicious as to believe there is a God whose character is malevolent.

The phrase "Ignorance is the mother of devotion" is a lying proverb that was coined in the brain of the devil, and owes its currency to the children of perdition. It impeaches the integrity of God's character. It implies that the designs of the Infinite are unnatural and improper, and can not be known without inspiring contempt and hatred, instead of reverence and love; that human existence is an unavoidable calamity which is easiest endured by those who least understand it. This is such frightful madness that it could have originated only in the fever-disordered imagination of a fallen angel. True religion, therefore, has nothing to do with ignorance but to destroy it. There can be no compromise in the matter without injury to religion. When ignorance and religion come in contact with each other one of two things must occur: religion must crush out ignorance, or ignorance will per-

vert religion into superstition. And superstition is as little like true religion as a monkey is like a man. It is the infinite shame of an ape that he so much resembles a man and yet falls so far short of being a man. It is the crying disgrace of superstition that is so often mistaken for religion while it differs so widely from it. Superstition, Dr. Johnson said, was "religion without morals." You will see how admirable that definition is when you examine the facts that give it a basis. Ignorance and superstition produce veneration in men. But this may exist without moral sense or conscience. You may find a thousand men who will worship something to one man who will live honestly and deal mercifully. The instinct of adoration is so pronounced in men that no nation is without some kind of worship. But mere worship is far from true religion.

RELIGION MINUS ETHICS.

The devout Mussulman does not outrage his sense of sanctity by rushing from his knees to commit rapine and plunder. The devout Hindu does no violence to his religious conceptions when he leaves his incantations to perform some loathesome crime, and even professed Christians have been known to commit deeds that would shame a savage.

When the Duke of Anjou had determined to play falsely with the Dutch provinces that had made him their sovereign lord subject to their ancient constitution, he called his minions about him after he had gone to bed, and when they applauded his infamous propositions, he leaped from his bed, and, kneeling in his night clothes by its side, he piously invoked the blessing of Heaven upon his nefarious project. The trouble with the Duke of Anjou, as with the Mussulman, the Hindu, and all other pious frauds, is a defect in conscience—not veneration. And conscience is capable of an education, which is quite as much of the head as of the heart. One reads of a theologian whose heart is Christian but whose mind is pagan. And every Christian minister has met scores of persons whose sentimental regard for religion, and whose emotional attitude toward truth, was above fault, but whose mental apprehension of right and wrong was strangely in error. They were never quite able to see truth in right relations. The importance of applying the processes of reasoning to the study of moral questions is, therefore, very obvious. Let us employ our brains, as well as our hearts, in sifting truth from falsehood.

III. Such thinking will not only acquaint the soul with itself, and afford it a standard by which to judge the moral quality of things, but it will also lead to the devotional habitude. It will thus conduct the soul out of the realm of the merely ethical into the larger world of the spiritual. It is easier to see that vile thoughts will produce loathsome lives than to perceive that pure thoughts create holy characters. Yet one is as true as the other. Milton sings,

"He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' th' center and enjoy bright day;
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the midday sun;
Himself is his own dungeon."

The contemplation of moral excellence will inevitably lead to a love for the true, the beautiful, and the good, and so following to the Author of all good. As the lover of outdoor life, the scientist who studies the forms of matter, the artist who scans the beauty of nature, the traveler who strolls through museums, galleries of art, and historic shrines, will involuntarily be drawn by his thoughtful contemplation of these objects to consider the origin of such manifestations of Divine energy in men and things, and thus ultimately find God; so constant meditation upon moral loveliness will surely bring the mind at last to the vision of the

Eternal Goodness. And as men grow in love for goodness they will become more conscious of their inability to realize the perfect excellence in their own characters without Divine assistance, and thus come to feel the pressing need of such a personal power as proceeds from vital contact with Jesus Christ, the Savior of men.

CHRIST A REQUIREMENT.

The ethical codes of the old Eastern nations contain much of the best morality to be found even in the Bible. Yet every traveler to the Orient confesses that the life of the people in these far-away lands is not on the high plane which is reached by Christian civilization. The precepts of the sages do not filter down into the lives of the great masses of the population. Even the priests, who stand as interpreters of these old cults, do not arrive at the realization of these precepts in their own characters. This is because the teachings of the best leaders have no great personality back of them in which they are set forth in vital reality. But the sayings of Jesus are concretely exhibited in His faultless life; and the Sermon on the Mount, which would be as incapable of lifting humanity to God-like heights as are the precepts of Confucius without such a personal vitalization, becomes active in

multitudes of human lives which derive their strength from living fellowship with Jesus Christ.

A German thinker who had not only been indifferent to the Christian religion, but positively and publicly hostile to its claims, was suddenly converted, and explained his remarkable transformation by saying, that when he found his life in ruins, he discovered that the supreme need of his soul was a Savior like Jesus, the Son of God. In the presence of an appreciation of Christ's power to redeem the soul from destruction, his infidelity was shattered to pieces like an ill-constructed house smitten by an earthquake. Let the young man who supposes that skepticism is an evidence of strong intellectuality, know that it is not too much, but too little thinking which has betrayed him into doubt. Let him think deeply enough, and he will find Christ an eternal necessity of his being.

O, how much we need to get out of the hurly-burly into the peace and calm, away from the poisoned atmosphere of a worldly environment into the pure fellowship of divine thoughts! John Wesley used to say, "It can hardly be that we should spend one entire day in a continual intercourse with men without suffering loss in our soul, and in some measure grieving the Holy Spirit." Until one considers the corroding influence of the world's tem-

poral interests upon the spiritual life, he is inclined to regard this an extravagant statement. Then he perceives that it is moderate and reasonable. Think! "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things," alone with God.

A professional woman, whose eyes failed her through overwork, lived for a season in a little village, and being forbidden to engage in her accustomed pursuits, and requiring occupation for her mind, she cultivated the friendship of all the little children in the place and made herself their idol. Whereupon she learned a thousand deep things from her association with these cherubs, fresh from the hand of God, of which she had never dreamed, and ever after looked upon this experience as of incalculable value to her own soul. Are you weary with the tasks of a sordid life? Are you heart-sick because the ideals of a noble life are so far from being realized? Do you sink oppressed with the consciousness of your own failure? Turn your gaze away from material interests. Think upon the moral excellences which are displayed so perfectly in Jesus, the Christ, and draw from fellowship with Him the strength of His Divine nature, and find how possible it is, approximately at least, to be like Him.

VII.

THE YOUNG MAN AND HIS OPPORTUNITIES.

"Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."—I SAM. XVII, 33.

THE king's reckoning was poor. Even royalty sometimes blunders. David disappointed the predictions of both friends and foes, smiting Goliath to death with a swiftness which appalled the Philistines and intoxicated the Israelites. The story is three thousand years old, and familiar to every child in Christendom. Yet it is of perennial interest, retaining all the fascination of the most recent military exploit. The blood of the youth is fired by the taunts of the giant; his brave spirit is stung by the inaction and cowardice of his countrymen. Against the protests of reason and prudence he sallies forth with an unheroic shepherd's sling and a

few smooth pebbles from the brook, weapons so ludicrously inadequate, as it seems, that the giant can scarcely contain himself for the contempt he feels toward the foolish lad. A few melodramatic sentences on both sides, some round cursing by the giant, and a little pious indignation on the part of the stripling—then David suddenly whirls his sling, sinks a stone into the forehead of Goliath, decapitates him with his own sword, and thus enables the Israelitish army to drive the fleeing Philistines with frightful slaughter clear to the gates of Gath. It was a glorious vindication of the ability of consecrated youth to accomplish mighty and valorous deeds. It teaches a lucid lesson for our times. As the hope of Israel rested in David, and the strength of her arms centered in his devotion, so the reliance of modern civilization is placed upon the youth of the age. Will the young men of to-day fulfill the hopes of their generation?

WANTED AT ANY PRICE.

Jean Paul Richter once said, "Providence has given to the French the empire of the land, to the English that of the sea, and [pleasantly satirizing their speculative habit] to the Germans that of the air." It may be said with equal truthfulness and

greater seriousness that Providence has given to the young men of our day a still larger inheritance. Everything belongs to them. All paths to power converge at their feet. All doorways of opportunity fly open at their approach. All treasure-stores are disclosed by their touch. The world grows weary of many things, but it shows an increasing fondness for young men.

Let him who fancies that these words exaggerate the current advantages of youth observe the facts which are everywhere patent. We are making bank presidents of young men at less than thirty-five years of age. Railway magnates ascend their thrones at a time of life when their fathers were yet dangling their legs from an office stool. Look upon the faces of the men most conspicuous in all lines of commercial and professional activity, as they are pictured in the illustrated periodicals of the day, and notice how youthful they are. Observe that editors, heads of corporations, lawyers, business potentates, men of all classes in high and leading places, are in large numbers singularly young. So far as the male population is concerned, it is safe to assert that the social, commercial, political, and religious life of this nation is predominantly under the direction, not of those whose locks are white,

but of those who are striving with indifferent success to raise hair of any color on their beardless cheeks. This is one of the most impressive facts of our modern life. A similar disposition to surrender the scepter to youth has manifested itself in every age, and it grows out of well-recognized facts in the very constitution of society. The aged pass steadily off the stage of action and leave the boards to new players. By the stern elimination which death executes the old are doomed to give place to the young. Mature persons care less and less for the prizes of life, and will not contend as earnestly for them as they did in earlier years. Thus they yield the arena of conflict to those inferior in age and experience. This has always been true to an appreciable extent. But the twentieth century surpasses all other periods in the eagerness which it shows to push the tasks of the world into the hands of young men.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF YOUNG MEN.

We need not pause to ask ourselves whether this temper of society is wise or foolish, and whether or not we see premonitory signs of a change in sentiment, which shall ultimately lead to a saner judgment. Sapient or silly, the disposition of our times

is obvious enough, and the young men of our time should make the most of it while it lasts.

Thackeray tells us that the mother of George III was forever dinning in his ears the injunction, "George, be king!" A king the simple, stuttering, affectionate, bigoted man tried to be. The obligations of royalty were upon him, and he probably did the best he could to discharge them, though the whole world knows he did not attain a distinguished success. The compulsion of sovereignty presses upon the young manhood of America. "Be king!" is the perpetual admonition. The duty of service and leadership can not be thrust aside. The consequences of bearing well or ill the sacred trust which Divine Providence has assigned to the young men of our day can not be avoided. Once again, and with redoubled emphasis, sounds the message of the preacher in Ecclesiastes, "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." If like the brave-hearted shepherd on the plain before Ephes-Dammin, the youth of our day will cherish those virtues for which he was conspicuous, some of which were born of his very

youthfulness, others of which were the result of his sublime confidence in God, they will also demonstrate their ability to do mighty conquests for righteousness, and will deliver their elders from the fear which torments them, as they gaze upon the conflicts yet to be won, and shudder at the apparent incompetency of those about to enter the lists.

I. Observe, in the first place, that *David dared*. Only the brave demolish the giants. Youth is the period of rashness and intrepidity. Nelson at the age of fourteen attacked a polar bear with a hand-spike, and when reproved for it said he did not know Mr. Fear. That is characteristic of youth. It does not calculate the chances of peril and failure. Maturity is often equally courageous, but more cautious. Excessive prudence frequently defeats the possibilities of heroic action. David was devoid of fear. He was scarcely old enough to have made fellowship with prudence. The tried warriors of the Israelitish army were conservative. The scarred veterans of many a gory field knew the perils of war, and hesitated. They gazed with terror on the giant's huge dimensions, and begged to be excused. They spent forty days in the melancholy business of considering the blusterer's spear,

in size like a weaver's beam. They shuddered at the magnitude of the spear's head, twenty pounds weight of iron. They estimated the resistance of that ponderous coat of mail, a hundred and sixty pounds of brass. They held their breath as they surveyed the giant's enormous body towering up eight feet into the air, and capped with a huge brazen helmet. With one accord they drew back and said, "It is not a good day for single combats. Prudence is the better part of valor. We will take no risks." That was not necessarily cowardice; that was caution.

THE VALOR OF YOUTH.

The young shepherd, who single-handed had killed a lion and a bear, and loved to boast of it, looked the giant over with a glance which made his dimensions shrink to pigmy proportions, looked through his coat of mail to his very soul, and said, "He is but a bragging coward. His heart is not as big as his spear-head. God has written his death-warrant, and I am his divinely appointed executioner;" and having secured royal permission, rushed at him with well-judged impetuosity, and in less time than is required to tell the tale Goliath of Gath lost his head, and the armies of Israel raised the shout of triumph.

History is brimful of illustrations of the benefits accruing to civilization from the intrepidity of youth. The very boys in the colonial period of our history were bolder than the men of experience, and hurried events along at a swifter pace than otherwise they would have taken. When the English Parliament passed the infamous Stamp Act in 1765, Benjamin Franklin, a man in his sixtieth year, a magnificent character from youth to age, but an example of the conservatism and hesitation of maturity, said discouragingly, "The sun of American liberty has set." The General Assembly was slow to move, and spoke of the outrage in muffled tones. Then Patrick Henry, only twenty-nine years of age, the youngest member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, waited only till he saw no one older would resent the insult, and snatching a blank leaf from an old law-book, drew up a series of inflammatory resolutions, and upon this platform of his own building, thundered forth such a philippic as made the ears of England's statesmen tingle with shame, and roused the heart and conscience of the whole American people.

There were thousands of persons in Germany at the opening of the sixteenth century who were shocked at the scandalous sale of indulgences and

alarmed at the notorious wickedness of the Romish Church, but it remained for the monk of Erfurt to stand forth alone and rebuke a hierarchy which was prostituting religious authority to private gains. He acknowledged in later years that he was at that time ignorant of the work that he had undertaken. It was the rashness of an enthusiast, many declared, and would soon defeat itself. But Luther was the embodiment of courage, and four years after he had nailed his theses to the door of the Wittemberg church he braved the Holy Roman Empire to its face, while all Christendom stood aghast with astonishment. The results of that temerity in the encouragement of religious liberty can only be measured in eternity; but not a century of history has since fled away without seeing humanity lifted to a higher plane by the seemingly rash and unpromising efforts of that young champion of truth.

THE SELF-CONFIDENCE OF THE YOUNG.

There is a superb egotism in youth, which may be the offspring of inexperience, and which certainly provokes much ridicule, but which often seems like the natural inspiration of the Almighty before it has been checked and suppressed by the world's opposition. The whole earth appears to

stretch out before the young man of spirit as a field which he is to conquer, nor does he doubt his ability to subdue it at the beginning of his career. After he has broken a lance or two in a tilt with his foes, or has been unhorsed once and again in the tournament of life, he will not hold his prowess in such high esteem. With increasing years he will lose that strong self-reliance which has made him so bold. That will be a pathetic loss, however justly an excessive dependence on self may be derided by the satirist. The extreme caution which advancing years will bring, the fear of the outlandish which comes with mature judgment, puts a bridle on the exultant spirit, and checks rapidity of movement. Says Howells, "As you get along in the forties you will understand that life is chiefly what life has been." Phelps, of Andover, has called attention to the fact which every observant person has noticed, that few men change their opinions in politics, religion, or any other matter, after they are forty. That entails a most important responsibility upon the young. There is no need to recite from history the evidence of what every student of life well knows, that most of the startling advances in the record of civilization have been made by men while they were comparatively young. Julius Cæsar,

John Wesley, William Lloyd Garrison, these are three out of hundreds of great figures which might be summoned from the past to show how much we are indebted to the fact that men will undertake in youth what they could not be dragooned into attempting after they are sixty. If David had been as old as Saul the probability is that he would have staid in the rear.

Let us not underestimate the worth of caution. It is an indispensable counterbalance to the inordinate enthusiasm of youth. Zeal without knowledge is terribly destructive. It is like the lightning let loose, dealing death and disaster wherever it listeth. It needs to be curbed, confined, directed by wisdom, that like the electric current, it may be a blessing to mankind. On the other hand, knowledge without zeal is nerveless and ineffective. It is not *knowing* alone, but *knowing and doing*, twin factors in the subjugation of evil and the enthronement of good, upon which we must depend for the world's redemption. Attention is called to the natural vigor and earnestness of youth, not to exalt it unduly, but to impress those who are young with the sacred obligation which rests upon them to consecrate whatever enthusiasm they have to the support of those great causes which God has thrust upon the

world in their time. As the young David feared no bragging giant, and hurled himself at the monster, so let our youth of to-day fearlessly fling themselves upon the foes of righteousness before the evil days of hesitancy creep upon them to enervate their zeal. An open eye will discover opportunities for valor. To perceive an opportunity is to have a revelation of duty. To shirk a duty is to suffer irreparable harm. It requires but the full dedication of one's powers to make the performance of duty keen delight.

" So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
 So near to God is man,
 When Duty whispers low, 'Thou must!'
 The youth replies, 'I can!' "

II. Observe, in the second place, that *David had sense*, a most valuable quality, in which some young men are said to be occasionally deficient. David clung to his sling and his pebbles, instead of trying to masquerade in the king's armor. He had a difficult task upon his hands, but he had no fantastic notions about equipment. When Saul tried the royal coat of mail on him, he felt overloaded and awkward, and preferred to meet the giant as he was accustomed to confront the beasts that attempted to enter his sheepfold. All this provoked the giant to ponderous mirth. He said: "Am I a dog that thou

comest to me with staves? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." How premature the gibe was Goliath knew when the first stone flew to its mark from the shepherd's sling.

FOLLOW YOUR APTITUDES.

The moral of this is very easy to read. Obey the dictates of your individuality. To be terse and plain: What you can do you ought to do, and what you ought to do you must do; but what you must do you only can do in the use of your personal endowments. An ounce of mother-wit is worth tons of technical training when an unexpected crisis occurs. "Shoemaker, stick to your last." When you have discovered your characteristic gifts, work them to their fullest capacity, but do not bother around with artificial agencies, the nature of which you do not understand.

In the Book of the Judges we have an account of the various deliverances which were effected by the heroes who figured so prominently in the days when there were no kings in Israel. There is one brief narrative which runs, "And after him was Shamgar, the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad; and

he also delivered Israel." That is the whole of Shamgar's recorded history, but it is eloquent with meaning. He worked his talents, and did not try his hand at methods of warfare he did not understand. An ox-goad would not ordinarily be considered a very imposing weapon of offense. But Shamgar could do better execution with it than with swords and spears.

In the same book we are told of the Benjamites, that "Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men, left handed; every one could sling stones at an hairbreadth, and not miss." These sharpshooters were worth more than all the rest of the fighting population of Benjamin combined, though their weapons were of the most ordinary character. Use your own tools. Prosecute your work in the channels of your own individuality. "Neglect not the gift that is in *thee*." Too many misguided persons are seeking to imitate some other man's method. See what you have, and seize the first opportunity to employ it. What have you? The divine gift of speech? Use it to persuade your fellows to the truth. The celestial endowment of a sympathetic nature? Put your arms about a stricken comrade, and hearten him for his struggles. The sacred power of a magnetic personality?

Turn it to account in winning the lost to righteousness. The material question is this, When you have ascertained what it is that you can do, will you do it with all your might?

“I slept, and dreamed that life was beauty;
I woke, and found that life was duty.
Was then my dream a shadowy lie?
Toil on, sad heart, courageously,
And thou shalt find thy dream to be
A noonday light and truth to thee.”

III. Observe in the third place that *David trusted God*. Mark the religious tone of his language, as he urges his claim to go against the giant upon the attention of Saul. Notice the pious fervor of his brave retort upon the blustering giant. David had begun to remember his Creator in the days of his youth. After Samuel has anointed him prospective successor of Saul, it was said that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.” How wondrously heightened the powers of our young men in America would be if they would “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness!”

AN ACT OF CONSECRATION.

Wendell Phillips represents one of the finest types of character which the history of America, if

not of the entire world, has given to us. A friend asked him one day, "Mr. Phillips, did you ever consecrate yourself to God?" "Yes," he replied, "when I was a boy fourteen years of age, in the old church at the North End, I heard Lyman Beecher preach on the theme, *You Belong to God*. I went home after that service, threw myself on the floor in my room, with locked doors, and prayed, 'O God, I belong to Thee. Take what is Thine own. I ask this, that whenever a thing is wrong, it may have no power of temptation over me, and that whenever a thing is right, it may take no courage to do it.' From that day it has been so. Whenever a thing has been known to me to be wrong, it has held no temptation for me; and whenever I have known a thing to be right, it has taken no courage to do it." That act of consecration will account for the decision of Phillips when he saw the mob carrying Garrison along the streets of Boston, bareheaded, with a rope around his waist, his clothing torn and bedraggled, but with brow upturned, face calm, and eyes flashing with the heroism of a martyr going to the stake. "Who is that?" asked Phillips. "That," answered a bystander, "that is Garrison, the damned Abolitionist. They are going to hang him." The mob swept on, but by the very compulsion of his

consecration to the right, Phillips was from that moment a staunch defender of Garrison and his antislavery cause. He was then twenty-four years of age, and a rising young barrister, but it was not long ere the lawyer's office was abandoned for the agitator's platform, and until slavery went down into a grave never to be opened, Wendell Phillips poured forth his soul in eloquent assaults upon "the sum of all villanies."

THE PRESENT CRISIS.

When one observes the righteous causes which await fearless champions in this day, he is constrained to believe that thousands of our young men have not begun life with a consecration to God, but with a dedication to self. Many of our noblest youth are being absorbed in the struggle for wealth. Their vital energies are being dried up by the sponge of commercial enterprise, while the greatest of all undertakings, the furtherance of Christ's kingdom, is suffering for leadership.

Immense interests are pressing for attention. For not forty days, but for thrice forty years, the braggart giant Intemperance has been defying the armies of the living God in America, growing more and more insolent every year, threatening to give

the advocates of sobriety over to the vultures, challenging them to come forth to single combat upon the sands of public life. But conservative and cautious veterans say it is not an opportune time for fighting. They see the brazen helmet with its nodding plume of gold, the coat of mail plated with heavy license fees, the politicians bearing a mighty shield compacted of legal enactments, the ponderous spear already crimsoned with the blood of a hundred thousand yearly victims, and they are affrighted. Little will be done to stifle the braggart's taunts if the youth of the country will not rise and sally forth to meet him. His cause is so deeply intrenched behind the cupidity of tax-payers and the representatives of the vested interests involved, that even good men hesitate to accept his challenge. Let the rising generation assume the obligation of their position, and smite the tyrant to the dust. They can purchase deliverance, if they will.

CAN WE DEPEND UPON YOU?

This is but one of many evils requiring to be vanquished. But it is typical of all. Society is grievously tormented and vexed with a legion of devils. They need not be named. Their hateful

presence all too plainly proclaims their nefarious influence. What are you going to do about it?

Charles, king of Sweden, father of Gustavus Adolphus, was an earnest Protestant, and proposed more for the cause of religious freedom in Europe than he was able to accomplish. His son, who was wondrously gifted, even in infancy, was his father's hope. Often, when some delicate and difficult reformatory movement was under discussion, the king would lay his hand fondly upon the head of Gustavus, and say to the bystanders, "He will do it. He will do it." The world knows how ardently the brave son strove to fulfill his father's prophecy. Will you do your part in like fashion? Will you courageously seize the manifest opportunities opening before you to-day, and discharge your duty in the fear of God? Only so can your Master "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

VIII.

THE YOUNG MAN AND THE SUPREME PASSION.

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed."—
PSA. LVII, 7.

IF ever a king is interesting, it is not when multitudes are doffing their hats in his august presence, or shouting huzzas at his splendid pageantry, but when he is whelmed in disaster, pursued by his enemies, or beset with rebellion. Alfred the Saxon hiding in the cottage of a peasant while the storm of Danish upheaval is passing; Louis Philippe cast upon the shores of Great Britain while his French subjects are creating a republic in Paris; James II housed at St. Germain with the Grand Monarch while a Dutch prince administers his government and occupies his throne,—these are more attractive, though more tragic, figures than any prosperous sovereign in the full tide of a successful reign.

If ever a poet is fascinating, it is when his verses are crimsoned with the blood-drops of sorrow

pressed from a breaking heart, or illumined by the ruddy flames of martyrdom. Ovid on the barbarous and inhospitable shores of the Euxine Sea, watching passing ships sweep grandly on to the Rome from which he has been cruelly banished; Milton submerged in the gross darkness of sightless eyes, and suffering the stings of political animosity; Wesley singing seraphic stanzas while mobs of infuriated ruffians are barking at his heels,—these are men who take deeper hold upon our sympathy and imagination than the poets-laureate who bask in royal favor and feast on popular applause.

I bring to your attention such a prince and such a poet in one personality,—David, the son of Jesse, illustrious through all time for superb qualities, a prince from whose line the Messiah is at length to issue, a poet from whose deft fingers fall some of the noblest lines which live in literature.

A DOMINANT AFFECTION.

Here is a man of genius, destined to fill a large place in the world's thought, announcing that he has found the true center of life, that he has attached himself to moorings from which he will never permit himself to drift, that he has surrendered himself to a sacred passion which is to con-

trol his life. That is a supreme moment in his career. Character is bound to be strengthened by such a consecration of the soul to God.

Devotion to something we must all have, if we are to approximate the dignity for which we were created. A human heart without an absorbing passion is like an eye without a ray of light, a mechanism without a purpose, a function without employment. If you have seen a human being devoid of a profound affection, you have seen a desert where no flowers bloom, a wilderness where living creatures can not subsist, an abyss where unfathomable darkness prevails; for, as Victor Hugo says, "If nobody loved, the sun would be extinguished." Let a great mind, which has once been dominated by a supreme passion, be deprived of its objective, and life loses its sustaining charm. Not long before his departure Bismarck, the "man of blood and iron," said with deep pathos, "I feel tired, but I am not sick. My complaint is uneasiness of life, in which I have no longer any object. Nothing that I see gives me pleasure." The loss of his beloved wife, the engrossment of his sons in their own pursuits, his involuntary retirement from political leadership, conspired to make his life aimless and empty.

On the other hand, if you have known persons

with a consuming devotion to some worthy object, you have probably seen humanity at its best. For nothing is better calculated to develop the finer qualities of manhood and womanhood.

GREAT AND SMALL PASSIONS.

The misery of much of our modern life is that so many persons of truly noble powers are willing to lavish their affections upon objects too small for immortal souls. They give to brutes the loving attention which ought to be conferred upon men, or they squander their affections on pursuits, excellent enough in themselves, but not of sufficient dignity to claim the whole devotion of a creature made in the image of God. It would be unjust to declare that the employments of the bibliophile, the antiquary, the numismatist are not commendable; but it is only truth to say that human beings are of more value than richly bound books, musty manuscripts, or the coins and medals of an obscure and distant civilization. Polite letters and scientific research may properly awaken our enthusiasm; but he who has the Spirit of Christ will not quarrel with Wesley for saying, "Gaining knowledge is a good thing, but saving souls is a better." When John Stuart Blackie, whose contributions to the

science of philology made him famous in two continents, resigned his chair of Greek in the University of Edinburgh, and resolved to devote himself to the Highland crofters, he said, in extenuation of his course, "Let Greek and Hebrew die, let learning go to the dogs, but let human brotherhood and charity live." To the spirit of this performance, if not to the act itself, we may give a respectful plaudit.

THE SUPREME PASSION.

These comparisons enable us the better to apprehend what it is which may be properly designated the supreme passion, and which is indicated in the profession of the poet-prince. He proclaims that he has given his heart irrevocably to God. To Him he will bring his imperial intellect. To His scepter he will swing all his immense resources of power. To Him he will devote the love of his mighty heart. The distractions of an Oriental court, the pomp and ceremony of a great State, the pleasures and palaces of an extensive kingdom, shall not be permitted to turn him aside. When these possessions have become his, which by Divine promise have been guaranteed to him, he will put them under contribution to God. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise."

Nothing in all the range of human ambitions can so steady and centralize a man's powers as this passion for God. Behold a modern instance of its efficiency. See David Livingstone in the heart of Africa the last year of his life, writing in his journal on his birthday, "My Jesus, my King, my life, my all, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee!" There you have the secret of an unquenchable zeal which carried through perils incredible with sublime heroism one of the grandest figures of any age.

It is this enthronement of Christ as the supreme object of the affections which is advocated in this discourse.

IS IT PRACTICABLE?

Can any other right affections co-exist harmoniously with this supreme passion? Why not? A Church dignitary has said, "A sermon should have one idea and many thoughts." Thus an earnest Christian may have one supreme love, and many other right affections. For all pure dispositions are related. Truth, we say, is a great unity. But it has manifold expressions. Truth is fundamental. Truths are ramifications of the true. So love that is pure is related essentially to all affections which are good in themselves. Love for wife, children, country, humanity are only intensified and purified

by love for Christ. A consecrated Christian ought to have a finer love for nature, home, native land than any other person. He ought to be able to devote himself to art, literature, music, every form of legitimate activity, with a finer ardor than the mere worldling. Havelock was every inch a soldier, though he was a thorough Christian. His men were called "Havelock's Saints," partially in derision, but the English regiments contained no better fighters. Daniel Webster said that whatever made a good Christian made a good citizen. All civil and domestic virtues have their strength renewed by a passion for Christ. Indeed, they derive their chief beauty and vigor from Him. We admire the beauty of the flowers, the brilliant hues of bird plumage, the flashing splendors of the diamond, the bright tints of the rainbow, the azure glory of the sky, the purple haze of the mountains. But we must know that the sun alone makes this beauty visible, as it alone makes it possible. So Christ brightens everything pure and good by His presence in the soul. There is never any question about patriotism, or parental and filial affection, or any other commendable devotion, when Christ is the object of a supreme love. Moreover, there are certain practical results of such a commanding affection which

are easily discernible. Prominent among these is the salvation of the soul from cheap passions.

THE REDEMPTION OF LIFE.

All good affections are related in spirit. It is not difficult, therefore, to find illustrations of the power of a grand passion to redeem life from littleness.

Here is Newton, with a passion for the problems of the physical universe, poring over his studies through the long watches of the night, and so transported as the morning dawns with enthusiasm for his work that he must needs call for help to steady his enraptured soul, as he approaches the completion of a great demonstration. Here is Joshua Reynolds, with a passion for art, holding his glowing pencil in his hand for thirty-six hours at a stretch, until he crowds his canvas with figures of enduring beauty. Here is Schliemann, with a passion for Oriental research, dreaming of buried Troy at eight years of age, finding time in the midst of uncongenial and unremunerative toil, which occupies him from early morning till late at night, to study the classics; with unremitting labor acquiring the languages of modern Europe, increasing his income each year by persistent industry, until at length the dream of his youth is realized; the civilization of

prehistoric times is exposed to view by his spade, he handles the jewels and crowns of departed kings, and takes his place among earth's most distinguished men. Here is Henry Martyn, an English scholar of high degree, with a passion for lost humanity. He plunges into India, confronts heathenism with a mild and beautiful spirit, preaches the Gospel with subtle power, translates the Scriptures into Hindustani, saying that in such delightful work days pass like moments. Despite premonitory symptoms of consumption he drives on triumphantly with his work, Bible in hand, cool, courageous, wise, blameless, "from Shiraz to Ispahan, from Ispahan to Teheran, from Teheran to Tocat, from Tocat to Heaven."

THE STRONGEST REDEEMPTIVE FORCE.

These illustrations serve to make apparent the method by which a master passion for Christ will not only purify and intensify all other good affections, but will also deliver life from cheap passions, and thus redeem it from littleness and baseness. We are aware how one low passion will deprive the soul of the power to attend to right things. Lofty mountains sometimes condense the cloudy moisture upon their slopes, and leave the plains below them

arid deserts. So sensuality, cupidity, or unholy ambitions, if they are permitted to become the important elements in life, will use up the soul's energies on ignoble purposes, so that they can not be directed to noble aspirations. The converse of this proposition fortunately is also true. If the soul is centered on some great and divine passion, its forces will be drawn away from the base and unworthy. Here is young Richter in his boyhood lying on the bank of a river deeply absorbed in a sensational novel. He suddenly lifts his eyes from the page, and exclaims, "This will not do. The more I read of this, the more disinclined to study I become," and he tosses the book into the stream. Here is Jenny Lind forsaking the operatic stage despite the protests of her friends, because, as she declares, the pursuit of her profession makes it more difficult for her to enjoy the beauties of nature and the wonders of the Bible. In this fashion it will be seen that a supreme passion for Christ will draw men away from evil. It is impossible to build a Chinese wall around human beings. They are as free as God himself. They can not be hemmed in by artificial restraints. But such self-imposed limitations are unnecessary where there is a supreme love for Christ in the souls of men. The Ten Commandments are not obsolete or

inoperative in the lives of true Christians. They are spiritualized and made unconsciously sovereign by the power of love. Pledges of duty and rules of conduct are not absent from such lives, but they are not apparent, because they are gathered up into one all-embracing principle of devotion to Christ. It is futile to legislate on questions of conscience. But it is very safe to trust a person with a master passion for Christ. Such a one may commit blunders of judgment, but his heart will evermore incline him to keep God's law.

THE SIMPLIFICATION OF LIFE.

The problems of life will thus be wondrously simplified. One of the notable defects in the lives of even religious persons is their lack of singleness of devotion. Complex and various are the interests which draw upon the affections of Christian people. In consequence of yielding to these influences we find dual and triple and quadruple personalities in one man. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are not mere creations of an ingenious mind. They are realities which society discloses all around us. In one of our great cities a striking example of the double personality has recently been discovered. This man has two names. By one

he is known to the police as a desperate character ; by the other he is regarded as an honest man, making his living by an honorable calling. He is a clever person, and boasts that he has earned a thousand dollars a year by his trade. But he has made almost as much in a single night through dishonest practices. He is much attached to his aged mother, but he is not ashamed of having undergone penal servitude for a murderous assault. There are many such persons in the world, though their good and bad propensities are not so glaringly displayed. There are Christians who are trying to hold two worlds in their hands, striving to serve God and mammon at the same time. This is not only impossible, but the attempt is fraught with misery. A master passion for Christ will straighten out such moral tangles, and reduce life to a simple basis of devotion to Him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTIES.

But ethical questions are not the only problems which interfere with the simplification of life. There are intellectual difficulties respecting creeds which torment many honest souls. Jesus was exceedingly delicate in his treatment of such persons. There is nothing kindlier in the whole range of

merciful deeds than His beautiful condescension to the skeptical Thomas, when he said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." He gave also to all doubters a great working principle by which the constitutionally skeptical could test the validity of his teaching. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." In another form that means, Trust me and keep my commandments, and your uncertainties and misgivings will be dispelled. Let us not be so foolish as to quarrel with creeds as though they were inherently evil. They are valuable charts showing the progress and development of theological thought. They are safe mooring places within the secure inclosure of which the religious navigator may take refuge in stress of weather. They are points of vantage from which the explorer may take observations. Their convenience is unquestionable. They are a necessity of our intellectual life. When a man says he has no creed he stultifies himself in the estimation of thoughtful people, who know that he can not undertake the commonest social and commercial duties without having a creed tacitly, if not formally, con-

ceived in his brain. At the same time there is no power in a creed considered by itself to affect character in any helpful way. Some of the foremost rascals on the earth have been the greatest sticklers for theological formularies. Even devils believe and tremble. It is safer to trust a man with a passion for Christ in any labyrinth of perplexity and doubt than a man with a lapful of correct theological propositions who has no absorbing love for Christ. St. Paul was in terror of schism and dissension. And there is always just ground for such a fear. But we may safely go with Fairbairn, who said, "There is only one schism, separation from the great Head of the Church." While men are centered in Him there will be no trouble about either creeds or conduct, and by parity of reasoning they will be sound in all social and civic relations.

THE PRODUCTIVE AND HAPPY LIFE.

Moreover, a master passion for Christ will make life productive of the highest usefulness and, hence, of the greatest happiness. Usefulness, of course, is not a matter of making money, but of spending it; not of acquiring an education, but of employing it for good ends; not of securing personal emolument, but of placing it under contribution for the

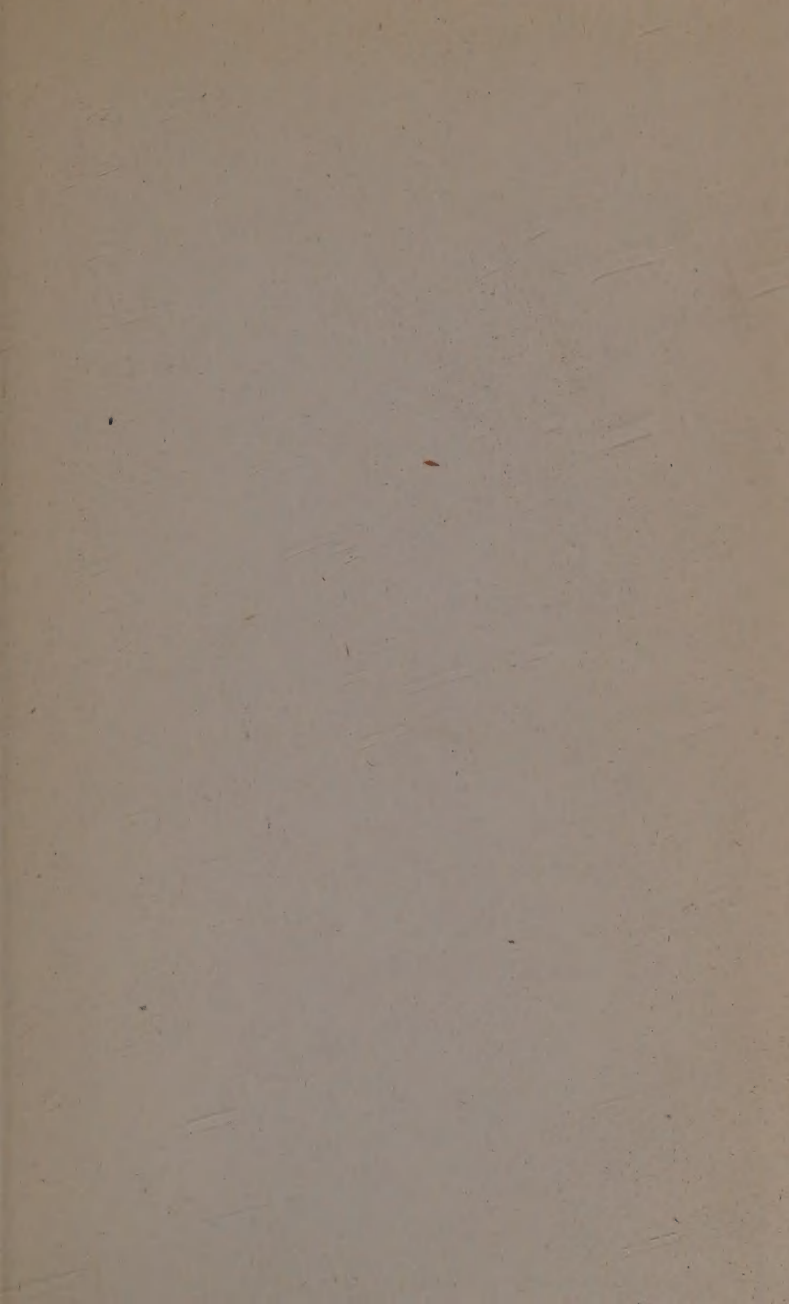
benefit of others; not of attaining success in art or literature or music, but of devoting that pre-eminence to the interests of society. It is strange that men should mistake their achievements for usefulness. The money a man made in Wall Street is no necessary measure of his utility. The case which the jury gave the lawyer, the medal which the academy gave the artist, the office to which his fellow-citizens elevated a leader, these are not measures of a man's usefulness, but of his ability. His real value consists in the conscientious use of the opportunities thus afforded for benefiting mankind. The master passion for Christ will regulate all that. It will not only correct and tone up his methods of winning success, but it will guide him to the proper consecration of that success. One can see Christ entering the counting-house and laying his pierced hands upon the ample securities therein treasured, striding into the artist's studio, the editor's sanctum, the musician's chamber, the lawyer's office, the statesman's cabinet, and the minister's study to receive the voluntary service of labor and genius for the help of humanity. And if Christ actually possessed the undivided affection of his disciples, there would be no pictures or books or sermons or music in the hands of Christians which did not bear His image

and superscription, and there would be no money or jewels or lands in their possession which would not be available for his employment. There would be no humanity helplessly groaning for relief, and no social problems vainly crying for solution, and no great causes dying for lack of intelligent advocates, and no heathen world perishing for the bread of life. Meanwhile, in return for the simplicity and frankness of their surrender to Christ these followers of our Lord would be supremely happy. For a consuming devotion to Christ is the deathless secret of the perfectly felicitous life.

Under a picture of the Crucifixion, Count Zinzendorf wrote these words: "I have but one passion: it is He, only He!" Let us read His words, and study His works, and live His life, until, all unworthy competitors having faded from our soul's vision, we find ourselves loving Him supremely. So shall life attain without a conscious effort its highest possible excellence.

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